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THE  
ESTABLISHMENT  
OF  
THE LAW  
BY  
THE GOSPEL.

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BY W. HAMILTON,  
MINISTER OF STRATHBLANE.

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GLASGOW:  
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TO

The Right Honourable

ARCHIBALD COLQUHOUN,

OF KILLERMONT,

LORD REGISTER OF SCOTLAND,

THE FOLLOWING TREATISE,

AS

A MARK OF THE HIGHEST ESTEEM AND

GRATITUDE,

IS

MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S AFFECTIONATE AND DEVOTED

SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.



## P R E F A C E.

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THE following Publication has originated in a wish to defend the Preachers of the Gospel from the charge of Antinomianism.

Nothing is more common than to hear them, in certain quarters, accused of an immoderate concern for the doctrines, whilst they are comparatively regardless of the duties, of Christianity.

The evangelical name has often been abused, by being assumed by men who have had no real right to that honourable appellation; and, therefore, it would be presumptuous to assert that the above censure is in no instance just: but, if understood as a general remark, which includes the whole body of evangelical preachers, we can confidently aver that nothing can be more remote from the truth. As far as it is possible to judge of their intentions from their language and conduct, we are warranted to affirm, that nothing lies nearer their hearts, than a desire to behold the authority of God re-established over the whole of this world's apostate population, to see the people rendered all righteous, and the whole earth filled with his glory. But whilst intensely set upon the attainment of these interesting events, they absolutely despair of ever securing their accomplishment by any other means, than the faithful manifestation of the leading and essential truths of Christianity. If, therefore,

our opponents were fully aware of our actual views and motives, and true to their own professed anxiety for the practice of good works, the very circumstance, which they are so forward to denounce as a crime, they would applaud as the most noble and worthy object of commendation: for our ardour in illustrating and recommending the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, is inspired and maintained by superior zeal for the advancement of holiness. The writer must say for himself, and in this declaration of his own sentiments, he is persuaded that he is uttering those of the great mass of his brethren, that, next to his conviction of its truth, nothing has ever more powerfully contributed to rivet his adherence to the evangelical system, than the holy effects by which it is followed, and the prodigious advantage with which, on its principles, he can enforce the obligations of morality, and promote the great ends of practical godliness.

Whilst, however, this little work was undertaken to vindicate the preachers of the gospel from the foul calumny of being indifferent to the claims of moral goodness, it is to be hoped, that it may be the mean of inducing some of an anti-evangelical creed, who, while sincerely attached to the cause of virtue, have, by the misrepresentation in question, been prejudiced against the gospel, as a system which encourages licentiousness, to review the grounds on which they have opposed it, and thus of leading them to embrace the only doctrines, which the God of heaven has blessed, for producing any

substantial or lasting change upon the hearts and lives of men.

In the course of the following pages a great deal has been said, from an earnest solicitude to reach the votaries of antinomianism, and to shew them that the peculiarities of their scheme are just as foreign, as the tenets of legality, from the spirit and design of Christianity. The law of God was in the heart of the Redeemer; and let men delude themselves as they please, they never can possess the smallest scriptural evidence that their names are written in heaven, till they find that its precepts are written on their own inward parts, nor entertain any well-founded expectation of reigning with him in his kingdom, unless they now resemble him in their temper and conduct: for, it is on the highest authority that we are assured, that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The present production may, perhaps, be of use to some evangelical preachers themselves. If there are any who are at a loss to follow out the practical bearings of their subjects, and to take complete advantage of the truths before them, for driving home upon the hearts and consciences of their hearers, the moral lessons which they administer; if there are any who are full and forcible in their doctrinal discussions, but, from the dread of fostering a self-righteous spirit, are deterred from being equally copious and energetic in urging the discharge of every Christian duty, it is to be hoped,

that they will perceive that this apprehension is altogether visionary; and see that, whilst a preacher stands upon evangelical ground, he never can be too warm and vehement in pressing upon men the performance of the whole of the Divine will, that he never can keep more closely by the footsteps of Christ and his apostles, than when he is employed, from gospel motives, in insisting upon the entire surrender of the heart and life to the service and glory of God. These great models for ministerial imitation never were deficient in their expositions of the articles of faith; and at the same time, they never have been equalled in the frequency and cogency with which they inculcated every branch of obedience. With these illustrious examples before us, we may depend upon it, that we never can be more usefully, nor appropriately occupied, than, when like them, we are engaged with all the earnestness and fervour that we can command, in exhorting those, who have believed in Jesus, to be careful to maintain good works, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness.

If the Author has in any degree succeeded according to his wish, this Treatise will tend to unfold one of the delightful marks of the truth of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, their simplicity and consistency. Whilst error is contradictory, endless, and pernicious, it is refreshing to know that truth is always simple, uniform, and salutary. Accordingly; whilst the Antinomian, for fear of trenching upon the prerogatives of the Divine be-

nignity and clemency, is afraid to speak of the claims of duty, and the legalist, from the suspicion of encouraging ungodliness, is terrified to dwell upon the doctrines of grace; the enlightened evangelist, who knows the strength of his system, is haunted with none of these imaginary terrors: with the freedom and decision, which a good cause never fails to create, he gives to the law all its rights, and to the gospel all its high and well-earned honours. Coming boldly forward to proclaim the endearing provisions of redeeming mercy, he finds, in the boundless kindness which it reveals, an argument to urge, with a matchless efficacy and force, the cultivation of good works, and an instrument, by means of which, he can raise their interests to an unprecedented elevation; so that whilst he yields to none in his veneration for the fundamental truths of evangelical religion, he can enjoin a loftier and purer morality, than they ever possessed, upon the partizans of legality themselves.

Though the topics treated are mostly of a controversial nature, the writer has studiously avoided all the bitterness of controversy. If, in any instance, he has been unconsciously betrayed into that odious spirit, or has uttered a single sentence that can give unnecessary pain to any, it will be to him a matter of deep regret. His object was not to widen, but to close, the breaches in the Christian world. One of the greatest benefits attending the amicable discussion of religious questions,

is to place the truth in a more conspicuous and impressive point of view. It is by prejudice and error that believers are kept asunder. If they were all agreed in the faith, they would soon be all united in the hope, the love, and obedience of the gospel. It is through the truth that they are joined to the Lord Jesus Christ: and, like the rays of light, which all flow from the sun, and which the nearer that they approximate their common centre, the nearer they approach to each other, the more firmly that Christians cleave to their glorified Head, the more perfectly will they bear his adorable image, and the more closely will their own hearts be knit in affection to each other.

STRATHBLANE MANSE, }  
May 10th, 1820. }

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THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LAW  
BY  
THE GOSPEL.

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CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

*On the perpetuity of the Law.*

OF all the clamours by which the preachers of the gospel are assailed, none is more odious and galling, nor more false and groundless, than the reproach that their doctrine is hostile to the interests of morality, and calculated to set the minds of men free from the restraints and obligations which the law of God imposes.

From the high tone of religion and of morals in christian countries, compared with the prostrate and degraded state of piety and the duties of life, in heathen and infidel lands; from the pure and elevated goodness manifested by those who are most distinguished for their attachment to the leading tenets of Christianity, contrasted with the loose and worldly practices of those who adopt a lower creed; and from the fact that the moral worth

and sublimity of serious Christians rise in exact proportion to the clearness with which they discern, and the closeness with which they cleave to the essential articles of the gospel: there can be no doubt that the charge of licentiousness, so long and so vehemently urged against evangelical truth, has no real foundation, and is the effect either of mistake or of prejudice; and that notwithstanding all the apprehensions entertained of its demoralizing spirit, it possesses some secret charm, which completely counteracts its corrupting tendencies, and spreads around the whole system an atmosphere of health and of sanctity which purifies and invigorates every principle of action, and imparts to the virtue of those who enjoy it a matchless elevation and energy.

In entering, therefore, upon this attempt to vindicate the holy nature of the gospel, it is highly gratifying to know, whether success shall attend this undertaking or not, that success is at least attainable, and that an abler advocate of the cause may effectually accomplish what its present defender fails to perform.

It may be proper to observe, that, by the Law, in the following dissertation, is understood the moral law, or that rule of duty which God originally prescribed to his creatures, which reaches the whole intelligent creation, and extends to the use of all their faculties, and the performance of

the whole of their actions. Holiness, or moral goodness, consists in conformity to its precepts; and the violation of what it enjoins, constitutes guilt and sin. By the Gospel is meant the Christian dispensation; or the revelation of the grace of God for the recovery of man, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, from the awful state of depravity and wretchedness in which sin had involved us, and our restoration to the enjoyment of his favour on earth, and the possession of everlasting life in heaven. The most interesting and valuable truth which this merciful scheme contains, and which forms its leading and distinguishing feature, is the promise of free and complete forgiveness of sin to all who embrace the atonement. In this sense the gospel is frequently opposed to the law; and in that case it denotes salvation by grace, in opposition to justification by works. It is in this sense that the gospel is an object of suspicion and dislike to the legal and self-righteous: and it is in this sense of the term that the friends of evangelical religion are required to defend it from the charge of antinomianism. To maintain, therefore, that the law is established by the gospel, is substantially the same as to affirm that the interests of holiness are best and most effectually secured by the doctrine of salvation through grace.

In order to guard the gospel from abuse, and cut off every pretext for the aspersions cast upon

it as contributing to undermine the foundations of morality, and afford men a plea for continuing in sin that grace may abound; some have given such a representation of its nature, as has, to every intent and purpose, converted it into the law under another name; for they not only speak of it as a rule of life, and talk of its duties and its precepts; but likewise describe it as a system which demands works of obedience, and exercises of faith and penitence, of reformation and of piety, in order to justify its subjects and entitle them to the possession of the blessings which it announces.

According to this hypothesis the law and gospel are made completely to coalesce: the gospel is rendered utterly superfluous and useless, and totally deprived of a separate and independent existence. For as there is no work of righteousness binding upon the heart and conscience of human creatures, but what is most clearly and forcibly inculcated by the law, if the gospel were intended to do no more than merely to enjoin the performance of religious and moral duties, it is neither more nor less than a republication of the law: and as the holy tendency of the law is well known and universally acknowledged, on such a supposition, there could not be the slightest shadow of a pretence for accusing the gospel of licentiousness, nor the least occasion for asserting its holy nature, and spiritual design. By thus identifying the gospel with the law, the whole controversy about the moral effects

of evangelical truth, is at once annihilated; and when we have no vestige of the gospel left, it would be as absurd and idle to dispute about its practical consequences as about the operations or properties of a non-entity.

In vindicating the holy tendency of the gospel, and in enforcing the claims of the law, there is no more necessity for having recourse to the silly and pitiable shift of surrendering the existence of the gospel, or of abandoning any of the truths which it contains, than for lopping off the limbs of a traveller to prevent him from wandering, or for setting a vessel on fire to preserve it from sinking. The obligation of men to yield obedience to the authority of the Most High may be most easily and abundantly proved without setting their opinions loose upon the all-sufficiency of our Redeemer's sacrifice, or making the slightest infringement upon the radical and leading fact in the Christian system, that we are justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

If we read our Bibles to purpose, and understand the precious truths with which each of their sacred pages is enriched and stored, we must admit, in the fullest and broadest sense of the terms, that there is a gospel, and that this gospel is all a dispensation of mercy; that we are redeemed from guilt and perdition solely through the sufferings and death of the Saviour; that however valuable

and necessary good works may be to prove the reality of our faith or qualify us for the enjoyment of heaven, they cannot contribute the smallest fraction to our justifying righteousness, nor in the slightest degree recommend us to the approbation and favour of our Judge: that as the vilest are not debarred on account of their demerits, from the ample and liberal invitations of the gospel, the best cannot by their religious performances, or virtuous accomplishments, procure the notice or commendation of God: for if there be one truth in the volume of inspiration, more clear and unquestionable than another, it is the fact that all who are saved, “are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.”

The free and gratuitous nature of justification pervades every representation, which in Scripture, is given us of the nature of that inestimable blessing; and it is this property of justification which constitutes the great excellence and glory of the gospel, which brings it within the reach and the level of every human creature, and renders it good tidings of great joy to all mankind. Without feeling this fact, and dwelling largely and fully on it, we never can reach the centre of the Christian system, nor secure that elevated and commanding position, from which we can make the truths of redemption bear, with an irresistible force and soul-subduing energy, upon the hearts

and consciences of our fellow-immortals. Without proclaiming freely, and without fear, a full and finished salvation, from which all our personal performances of every quality and name are excluded, we never can preach the same glorious gospel which was published by the apostles among the nations, and carried by them to the remotest ends of the earth. Wherever they went, they were haunted with the accusation of introducing a system which subverted the foundations of moral obligation, and opened the floodgates of profligacy and vice. Again and again, were they denounced for making the law void through faith, and for encouraging men to continue in sin, that grace might abound. But with what semblance of truth or fairness could such a slander as this, either have been advanced or repeated, if they had preached a compound of the law and the gospel, and taught that men are to be justified either in whole, or in part, by their moral virtues or religious duties? Unless they had distinctly and earnestly enforced the doctrine of salvation by grace, or of justification by faith without the deeds of the law, it is utterly impossible either to account for the origin of this aspersion, or to discover its application to their ministry. The censure, therefore, so generally thrown out against them, forms a simple and decisive test of the nature of their instructions, and affords every preacher an easy and infallible standard, by which to

estimate the quality and tendency of his own ministrations. As the hostility of the carnal and self-righteous mind to the humbling doctrines of the gospel continues unabated, we may rest assured that if we were treading in the footsteps of the apostles, we would receive from their revilers exactly the same obloquy and abuse which they sustained. Unless, therefore, men of a legal and pharasaical spirit are loading us with the same reproach which was so plentifully heaped upon them, so far from regarding their forbearance or applause as a ground of self-gratulation, we ought to view it as a severe condemnation; for it gives us sad reason to suspect that we have departed from the simplicity of the gospel, and are not preaching the truth as it is in Jesus.

Having cordially paid, at the outset, this humble tribute to the transcendent importance of the leading articles of our holy faith, in the honest hope, that, by thus admitting them in all their extent and latitude, I shall not, in this attempt to vindicate the purifying tendency of Christianity, be considered as actuated by any unfriendly feeling to the essential truths of evangelical religion, nor suspected of having recourse to the awkward and clumsy expedient of defending the law at the expense of the gospel, and of founding the interests and obligations of morality upon the overthrow and ruins of the doctrines of grace; I proceed to the object more immediately

before me, which is to shew that the law has been ratified and confirmed, strengthened and established by the gospel.

Here it is a matter of great moment to remark, that in this discussion we possess a decided advantage over our opponents, from the fact, that there are so many strong reasons before-hand to prevent the belief that the law ever could sustain any modification at all; that nothing short of the most clear and irresistible evidence can induce the mind to assent to the astonishing and incredible assertion, that it has been relaxed or repealed by the gospel.

To allege that the law can admit any modification or repeal, proceeds upon a supposition equally dishonourable to the original excellence of the law, and to the wisdom and perfection of its Divine and adorable Author. It assumes that the law was originally rigid and unjust, or enacted by a legislator, who was incapable of perceiving what was befitting his own character or suitable to the circumstances of his creatures.

Now, so far from being rigorous or unjust, from being imperfect or wrong, it is an exceedingly good law. The law of the Lord is perfect. His law is the truth. The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good. The righteousness of its testimonies is everlasting. Let us either survey it as a whole, or take a view of it in its separate and independent parts; and

say where, within all the wide range and compass of its precepts and penalties, of its requisitions and sanctions, is there a single article that needs to be erased or altered, suspended or repealed? The sum and substance of the law is the supreme and ardent love of God, and the sincere and steady love of man. And is there any thing improper or unjust in these injunctions? Any thing that is dishonourable to God, or hurtful to our brethren? Any thing that can impair our individual happiness, or injure the general prosperity and welfare of society? Supposing, that from this spot, all round to the world's end, and from this moment down to the last beat of time, the precepts of this law were written on every heart, and made legible in every life; that every individual, in every succeeding generation, were to adopt in his earliest youth, and amidst all the temptations and vicissitudes around him, were tenaciously to retain till his latest age, a firm and inflexible attachment to every principle which it contains, and to every practice which it inculates: what harm, either to God or to man, could possibly result from this universal and cordial obedience to its precepts? Would it shake the allegiance of man to his Maker, or diminish the amount of virtue or of bliss to be found within the confines of the globe? Of all the improvements with which the habitations of mortality could be visited, this would be by far the most desirable and

delightful. The pleasing representations of prophecy, in their most lovely and endearing form, would speedily be realized. The wilderness and the solitary place would be glad: the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose: it would blossom abundantly, and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The baneful empire of vice and impiety, of fraud, cunning, oppression, malevolence and cruelty would instantly be subverted and destroyed: peace, concord, kindness and confidence would revisit the world, and re-establish their mild and auspicious reign amongst the children of men: man would cease to be the foe, the scourge and terror of man; each would bend on his neighbour the eye of a friend, and feel for him all the tenderness and affection of a brother: the principles of religion and of righteousness would pervade every heart, and give their form and colour to every feature of human character, and to every branch of human business; and render earth itself, which sin has so long polluted and accursed, the foretaste and image of heaven.

From an examination, therefore, of the spirit and design, of the tendency and effects of this law, we can discover in it nothing that is defective or redundant; nothing that is erroneous or wrong, nothing that is unworthy of God to appoint, nor unfit for his creatures to receive.

And if it be once admitted that it was originally perfect, that its precepts required no greater an

amount of duty and obedience than what was absolutely just and right, and that its penalties denounced no more punishment than what the violation of its commands most reasonably deserved: if thus it be once admitted, that the law of the Lord was originally perfect; and if this admission be refused, we surely have a title from our opponents to know, what other than a perfect law could proceed from a holy, just, and righteous God: but if it be once admitted that it was originally perfect, then it is stamped with the attribute of immutability, and in its extent and latitude, without the least alteration in all its terms, or the slightest abatement in its demands, it must remain for ever the same. For what modification could such a constitution sustain, which would not be a change for the worse and not for the better? a change from good to evil? from absolute rectitude and unsullied purity and beauty, to imperfection and deformity, to weakness and to evil? And is it credible that the all-perfect and ever-blessed Jehovah, who sits on the throne of the universe, and sways the sceptre over creation, for the purpose of maintaining in their highest splendour and most unbending form, the reign of righteousness and truth, would ever give his deliberate and solemn sanction to a measure so utterly inconsistent with the dignity of his character, so completely at war with every perfection of his nature, so totally repugnant to every principle of his government, and so directly

calculated to shake the foundations of his empire, and tarnish the glory of his throne?

If ever it was the intention of God to revoke this law, and free the children of men from its obligation, why did he appoint it at all? Why prescribe it to Adam in paradise, or render it binding on him or on any of his descendants? With the solitary exception of securing our acceptance with God, what single advantage would have followed from an unreserved compliance with its precepts in a state of innocence, which cannot attend their observance now? or what benefit can result from the keeping of its commandments in heaven through eternity, which cannot be derived from a cordial and devoted obedience to them on earth, and in time? Can holiness of heart and of life contribute more to our dignity and delight in one condition than in another? Why then did the all-wise and unchangeable God enjoin its observance upon the first human pair, unless he was determined in every succeeding generation, to maintain its rights in their full authority and force? Are we for one moment to entertain the unworthy and degrading idea, that the Most High was ignorant of the consequences of his own measures, and reduced to the necessity of making an experiment upon the capacities and powers of his creatures? and that, like an engineer, who, when he constructs a new machine, is necessitated to stand by and watch its operations, and witness its performance, before ho

can pronounce upon its merits, the eternal and omniscient Jehovah, whose all comprehending mind sees the end from the beginning, and whose arrangements are formed with such consummate wisdom, that with him there is no variableness neither shadow of turning, was compelled to suspend his decision upon the obligation of the law, till once he had for a season, committed it to its fate, and seen the reception which it obtained from the sons of Adam?

I shall perhaps be told, as others have been told before me, that man, in a state of innocence, was perfectly able to obey the law; but as this is a task now far beyond his strength, the want of a capacity and power to observe it, is a valid and sufficient reason for its relaxation or repeal.—And are we then to believe, that the law is to suffer for the sin of its subjects, and that when they violate its enactments, it is then to forfeit its title to punishment for the past, and to obedience for the future? If it were possible to suppose that the law had made any encroachment upon the rights and prerogatives of the creature, that it had overstepped the limits of reason, and of equity, in such a case it is possible to conceive that it might have sustained some abridgement of its demands, and forfeited some of its claims upon his homage and regard. But when man is the transgressor, and the law has done nothing amiss, is it then to be stripped of its rights, and visited with the vengeance due to the guilty rebel? Is the plundered traveller to undergo the punishment

which law and reason denounce against the nightly depredator? Is the beneficent and patriotic sovereign to suffer for the crimes of the turbulent and dark-minded traitor? Or is the law of heaven to be shorn of its authority and titles on account of the vice and wickedness of those who are bound to obey it?

Let the capacities and powers of fallen man be what they may, that surely must be a very flexible and convenient law indeed, which bends and twists and plies, till it accommodate itself exactly to the taste, the humours, and inclinations of those who are under it; which peremptorily and rigidly insists upon a punctual and perfect compliance with all its precepts, aye and until they choose to violate them, and are disposed to obey them no longer: and then, instead of coming forward, fully armed with resolution and authority, to exact condign punishment for the criminal breach of what it had decreed, leaves the transgressors to the unrestrained enjoyment of their own discretion, and allows them unbounded liberty in future either to obey it or not as they please? Do the transactions of men ever exhibit specimens of such conduct? Does the merchant pointedly insist on a certain price for his goods merely until a bargain is concluded; but from the moment that they are transferred to the possession of the purchaser, permit him either to pay the whole or a part, or no part at all, as best suits his own inclination? Do human legislatures

demand obedience to their edicts only while the subjects choose to yield it, but from the moment that an offence has been committed, retract their statutes, and allow the criminals in future to live according to their own will and fancy? And is it credible, that the God of heaven and of earth, after prescribing to his creatures a law which was holy, just, and good, and in the observance of which, his own honour was as deeply concerned, as their present and eternal welfare, after they had once broken through its righteous and salutary restraints, instead of visiting their inventions with merited vengeance, would curtail its enactments, reduce the high standard of its requisitions, accommodate it to the taste and wishes of the criminals, and grant them a free licence, in future to live according to their own humour and caprice?

If man be unable to obey, he certainly has the greater cause to undergo the penalty due to his disobedience, for what but his own wilfulness or wickedness, which are the true names for his weakness, prevents him from obeying? Except his innocence, or holy disposition of soul, what single bodily organ or mental power did Adam possess, when he came fresh from the hands of his Creator, which we do not retain to the present hour? We have each a pair of eyes, and a pair of ears; and he had no more. We have each an understanding, a heart, a conscience, and a will; and he had no more. And whilst our faculties and powers are sub-

stantially the same with his, what is there at this moment which the law of God demands, but what each of us if we were willing, or in other words, if it were not for our wickedness, we might very easily render? Look at it as it stands on the records of revelation, and say, What can be more just and reasonable than its requisitions? At the very utmost it commands us to do no more than to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and our neighbour as ourselves. If it had enjoined us to love God and serve him with all the spirituality of upright Adam, or with all the elevation and intensity of the rapt seraph, that adores and burns: then we might have had good cause to have complained of the extent of its demands, and to have affirmed, that their fulfilment was far beyond the reach of human power. But when each of us, amidst all the wreck and ruins of the fall, has escaped with a heart and a soul, when we can lavish their strength and energy on any object that we love, and employ them in any pursuit and for any purpose that we please: and when the law of God, instead of obliging us to equal the performances of the angels of light, or of the spirits of the just made perfect, merely commands us to love and serve him with the heart and the soul that we have, what can be more just and reasonable than its requisitions? At the very utmost, what more do these exact than to give to God the amount of that homage and obedience which is within our reach?

And can any thing be more base and criminal than to refuse to love and honour, as we can, the infinite and all-glorious Jehovah, and to withhold from him and from his service the use of those faculties and powers which his own hand first implanted, and which his own providence and care sustain every day in existence and in exercise?

The enactments of this law appear to be incapable of repeal or change, for they are all founded in the relation in which we stand to God as his creatures; and as that relation is unalterable, the enactments of that law, which is founded on it, must also be immutable. If like the weather, which is sometimes clear, and at others cloudy, sometimes settled and serene, and at others troubled and tempestuous; the relation betwixt God and his creatures were fluctuating and variable; if at one time they were under his dominion, and at another independent of his providence and power; if at one time they were more, and at another less than his creatures, then the obligations of his law might proportionably vary, and the homage and obedience that we owe him might occasionally admit of increase and diminution: But if our relation to him is always the same; if in every condition, and under every internal and outward change we are always his creatures; if we are perpetually protected by his arm, and dependent upon his care; if we receive every comfort from his bounty, and at every moment live and move and have our being in him:

how is it possible that the obligations of his law, or the measure of our obedience, can ever admit the slightest variation? Supposing that the earth and all its works were this day dissolved, and that no trace nor vestige of the whole of the mighty mass were to be left in the wide fields of air; what alteration could its annihilation produce upon the laws of nature, or upon those principles which regulate the affections of one particle of matter to another? Whenever another planet, possessed of similar properties with our own, should be launched from the hand of its almighty Creator, these laws would anticipate its entrance into existence, and from the first moment of its formation pervade all its parts, and impress their influence and energy on the whole. The waywardness and folly of one son, cannot annull the duties of the filial relation, nor in the slightest degree weaken or destroy those principles, which ought uniformly to animate and guide that flow of kindness and devotion, which should at all times circulate betwixt the father and every member of his family. And let the apostacy of man be ever so foul and criminal, and let his depravity be ever so deep and inveterate, as no language indeed is sufficiently strong to express its actual amount, can this, in a single article, alter or impair the right and the claim, which the law of the Lord possesses upon our heart and our life, upon our faculties and powers, upon all that we have, and all that we are? Let our guilt and depravity be ever so fla-

grant and enormous, still his amiableness and glory remain unchanged; our original obligations to his kindness, and munificence are unabated; the rights and prerogatives of his law continue unaltered: they remain more stable and lasting than the earth and heavens; and like the relations betwixt figures and numbers, are absolutely immutable and eternal.

If ever it had been the intention of God to release his creatures from the obedience which they owed to his law, the simplest and the shortest method certainly would have been to have repealed it at once, and then to have announced the fact by a general proclamation to the children of men. This would have effectually secured his object, and completely have superseded the necessity of having recourse to the circuitous and expensive process of redemption. If a province of an immence empire, rise in insurrection upon account of some paltry but obnoxious impost, if its removal cannot injure the revenue, and if the prince has secretly resolved to repeal it: say, whether would it be more rational and becoming, instantly to rescind it, or to retain it in force, till he had put all the military strength of his kingdom in requisition, and drained his exchequer of its treasures, till he had lost the flower of his forces, and witnessed the fall of the best and noblest of the land; and then when the kingdom was utterly wasted, and the few surviving rebels compelled to submit to mercy; just then when he had swept all opposition from before him, and acquired the means

of enforcing its payment, with safety and success, he would allow the odious tribute to expire, and at last silently grant them the whole of the boon, which they had at first solicited? If succeeding ages have reprobated the folly of Pyrrhus, who proposed no more to himself, as the reward of all his labours and privations, in overrunning Greece, reducing Rome, and conquering the world, than merely to sit down and enjoy himself with his friends, which he might instantly and most liberally have done, without putting one soldier in motion, or stepping a single inch beyond the bounds of his paternal dominions; if ever the Most High could have waved the claims of his law, and dispensed with its observance; if ever, in consistency with the dignity of his character, and the great objects of his government, he could have exempted man from its restraints, and indulged him with the possession of carnal ease and licentious freedom: when, without his Son's descending one step from his throne, or relinquishing for a moment his eternal blessedness and glory, all this could have been so thoroughly and so easily accomplished by a single stroke of his pen, or by a single sentence from his lips, is it possible to believe that the all wise and ever-blessed God, would have overlooked such a simple and obvious expedient, and, in order to secure our immunity from moral obligation, have subjected his Son to the low and degraded condition of man, and to all the ignominy and torture of the cross? If without personal holiness, we could have

been admitted to all the privileges and distinctions of the loyal and obedient subjects of Jehovah, to what purpose was this unexampled manifestation of mercy, and all this unparalleled waste of love.

The appointment, therefore, of a Mediator, so far from indicating a design to relax or repeal the law, discovers a deliberate and fixed determination to maintain it in all its extent and integrity.

## CHAP. II.

*Proof of the retention of the Law under the Gospel.*

### SECT. I.

Evidence of the continuance of the Law from the ministry  
of Christ and his Apostles.

EVERY thing connected with the purity and perfection of the law, and the prospective plans and the unchangeable character of its ever-blessed and all-glorious Author; every thing calculated to illustrate the equity and reasonableness of its claims, and the care of Deity to assert its rights and vindicate its honours; if insufficient to demonstrate its absolute immutability and eternal duration, at least go so far to establish its universal extent and perpetual obligation, that nothing below the most clear and incontestible proof can ever extort our assent to the strange, the astonishing, the incredible, affirmation that this law has been revoked or relaxed. A repeal or alteration of its enactments is so completely contrary to all that we are led to anticipate, that we cannot for one moment admit the assertion without the most distinct and irresistible evidence. The consequences depending upon such an event are so numerous and momentous, that we cannot believe we would have been left to infer its existence from dark and distant hints, and

far less to deduce it from our own conjectures and surmises. If we are to judge from the general analogy of the Divine dispensations, and especially from the conduct of the Most High in a parallel case, we have reason to maintain that the intelligence would have been unequivocally announced, that it would have been written as with a sun-beam, and made as manifest and unquestionable as the light of day. When the temporary economy of Moses was erected, its transitory nature was most explicitly foretold: intimations of its limited duration and figurative design were engrossed in the very body and substance of the dispensation; and when it actually expired, its termination and decease were pointedly marked in the pages of inspiration.

But where is any similar notice given of the temporary nature of the moral law? Where is its expiration predicted? or its dissolution and extinction recorded? Is its subversion indicated by such prophetic declarations as these referring to gospel times and gospel blessings? "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you: a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments

and do them. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more."

Does the following language, relating to the advent and work of the Messiah, betray any hostility to the law, or forebode any injurious consequences to the rights and interests of morality? "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever. The branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, **HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD:** and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar: yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah," all the articles of furniture and instruments of industry, "shall be holiness unto the Lord. He shall magnify the law, and make it honourable. Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order, and to establish it with judgment and with

justice, from henceforth even for ever. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord ; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord : and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears ; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth : and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb : and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together : and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed ; their young ones shall lie down together : and the lion shall eat straw like the ox ; and the sucking child shall play upon the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand upon the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain : ” and what shall be the cause of this astonishing and delightful moral transformation ? Will the doctrines of grace be abolished, and the law, in all its rigour and severity, restored to its dominion over the children of men ? No : “ For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,” of the truths which the

gospel proclaims, of Christ and of him crucified, whom to know is eternal life, and by the knowledge of whom many shall be justified; “as the waters cover the sea.”

And since these sentences do not bespeak its revocation, where is its relaxation or repeal recorded? Where within the compass of the sacred volume shall we find a counterpart to the epistles to the Hebrews, and the Galatians, or the slightest hint of an intention to rescind its enactments, or reduce its demands?

And if its abrogation has not been foretold in the writings of the prophets, nor registered in the records of the inspired historians, pray, when, or where, or to what extent has this modification or repeal been made?

Was it repealed at Sinai, when the foundations of the mountain shook beneath the descending Deity; and from the midst of lightning, and thunder, and tempest, and darkness, he lifted up his voice, and in the audience of the many thousands of Israel, proclaimed the provisions of his righteous and holy law?

Was it abolished or relaxed by the Lord Jesus Christ, when in all the mildness of humanity, and with all the compassionate tenderness of the incarnate Godhead, he deigned to visit and to bless this world of guilt and woe? If ever it could have sustained the slightest renunciation of its claims, if ever the Lord Jehovah could have fallen back a single inch from its just and reasonable de-

mands, surely now was the time, when, by such an august and illustrious messenger of grace and mercy, this important fact would have been openly and broadly promulgated. But did he come to weaken its force, or cancel any of its sacred and equitable requisitions? Did he come to set men free from its restraints, and allow them with impunity to trample on its high and venerable authority? Did he come to wage war against this most firm and unshaken ally of heaven, and rout the best guard and the most faithful support of the eternal throne? Did he come to crush the interests of religion and of righteousness? to eradicate every remain of piety and of virtue from the earth, and put the prince of darkness in undisputed possession of the sovereignty of the world? No: he came not to annul the law, but to fulfil it; not to justify anarchy and crime, but to vindicate the rights of justice and assert the cause of holiness and truth; not to overturn the kingdom of light, and demolish the institutions of God, but to subvert the empire of profligacy and vice, and destroy the works of the Devil.

If a life regulated by its spirit, and a death offered up to its honour; if a course of teaching which supported the untarnished purity of the law, and most powerfully pressed the most minute and cordial compliance with all its precepts, can prove the immutability of the law, and its eternal duration: then this proof is most triumphantly

afforded by the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The great drift of his preaching was to assert the integrity of the law, and enjoin the most intense and ardent devotion to its interests; his whole life was formed on its principles, and his death itself was sustained to satisfy its demands and confer majesty and dignity on its rights.

Though, without the least hesitation or scruple, he roundly affirmed the comparative insignificance of the ritual economy, and its rapidly approaching close, never did he breathe a single whisper to the prejudice of the moral law, nor give the most distant hint of a design to reduce the amount of its requirements, or set believers free from its observance. He spoke of a new commandment which he gave; but in vain shall we search all the records of his ministry for the slightest notice of an intention to reverse or suspend a single article of all that the decalogue contains. All that he did and all that he said proved a strong desire, and firm determination to maintain its prerogatives inviolate, to purge it from the false and degrading interpretations imposed upon it by a blind and venal priesthood, to restore it to its primitive purity, to seat it in high pre-eminence over every member of the great family of man, and secure the honour and obedience which it deserves, through every succeeding age. By what means could he manifest a more profound respect for

its dignity or a more sincere wish for its universal reception, than by being made under it, and in his own person fulfilling all the righteousness which it requires? How could he express a more decided and affectionate attachment to its interests than by illustrating its precepts in all their original simplicity, and inculcating them in all their native spirituality and power; asserting all its high claims, and stating in terms the most distinct and emphatic the guilt and the danger of infringing the least of all its enactments? By what language could he more solemnly and forcibly assert its absolute inviolability and perpetual obligation, than by declaring "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled?" By what means could he more effectually insure its integrity, and procure an unfeigned respect to each of its injunctions, than by embodying its enactments with the principles of Christianity, and rendering the discharge of the services which it prescribes, necessary to the enjoyment of the blessings which the gospel unfolds? He tells us that we are his friends if we do whatsoever he commands us, and assures us that not every one who saith unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who doeth the will of his Father who is in heaven. Never was there a duty binding on a human creature, but what preserves its place under the gospel, and to the present hour re-

tains its hold of every Christian's conscience. Within the whole range and compass of the decalogue, where is there a single precept which the Lord Jesus Christ has not transferred into the New Testament dispensation, and, by investing it with the whole weight and influence of his own express and positive command, has immoveably fixed it there? As in water face answereth to face, so the principles and practices of men under the gospel correspond to the duties and obligations by which they were bound under the law. For how is it possible by the force of words, or by all the majesty of high heaven, to confer on each of its precepts in detail, or on the whole in a body, a more decisive and permanent authority, than that which was conveyed by the Saviour of men when he said "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself?"

And whilst in this manner he has secured the entireness of the law, by what means could he have more signally displayed his affection for holiness, and his earnestness to obtain for each of its requisitions the full measure of the respect and obedience to which it is entitled, than by teaching us that the duties of men rise in proportion to their privileges, and that though he looks for much from all mankind, yet, from his disciples, who are the children of light, and whose advantages far surpass those of their brethren, he

expects more than from others? and by informing us that in the world to come, the most dreadful punishment shall be inflicted, not only on the profane and the hardened, the profligate and abandoned, but likewise on the careless and secure, the indolent and slothful, who, though possessed of the most invaluable blessings and the best opportunities for using them, have listlessly and criminally neglected to improve them? By what means could he more thoroughly demonstrate his own abhorrence of vice, and rouse men to a more vigorous and indefatigable discharge of every duty, than by telling us that the fig tree was ordered to be cut down, not for bearing bad fruit, but for barrenness; not for injuring the surrounding vines, but merely for cumbering, or uselessly occupying the ground? that the wicked servant was cast into outer darkness, not for purloining his master's property, nor for squandering it in vice and dissipation, but merely for burying his talent in the earth, or placing it where it was altogether unprofitable? and that, in the great day of decision, those on the left of the throne shall be banished into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels, not for having stripped the poor of their substance, nor for having lifted the hand of violence against the faithful, nor for having oppressed them and thrown them into prison, but merely for having neglected to minister to the wants of the indigent, and visit and relieve the

saints in the time of their persecution and distress?

Look at all this, and say, if these were the doctrines which might have been expected from one who came to curtail the claims of the law, and release us from the allegiance that we owed it? Look at the life and ministry of our Lord and Saviour, and say what more could he have done, than what he actually adopted, to convince us of his love to the law, and his solicitude to reduce every human creature to its obedience? His whole life was one unwearied effort to explain, to exemplify, and enforce its sacred principles; and when he died, for his life was too holy to allow it to be long in a world of such impiety and crime, his death was an attestation of its excellence, a sacrifice to satisfy its demands, to confirm its high authority, and secure its eternal prerogatives and rights. If, therefore, it be possible, either by words or deeds, to afford a complete demonstration of a desire and determination to maintain undiminished the claims of the law, and establish its perpetual obligation, that complete and irresistible demonstration has been given by him who died for our offences, and rose again for our justification.

And since the moral law, in all its original integrity and beauty, without the loss of a single syllable, or the erasure of a solitary iota, has been safely and triumphantly transported across all the distance and

dangers of the stormy and disastrous middle passage, which separates the old covenant from the new, and has by the Saviour himself, under this last dispensation of his grace, been left in full possession of all the honours and prerogatives, which in a state of innocence and bliss it enjoyed: has any, since his ascension to glory, received a commission to tear it down from the lofty elevation to which he had raised it, and procure its expulsion beyond the precincts of his mediatorial empire?

Was it rescinded or relaxed by the apostles, when, in obedience to his parting precept, they carried the glad tidings of salvation to the farthest bounds of the earth, and planted among the nations, as they passed, the gospel of peace in all the splendours of its celestial charms, and in all the fulness of its grace and truth? Was it for this purpose that as they went every where, they preached that men should repent? that they published through the world, and recorded in their writings, that all unrighteousness is sin, and that the wages of sin are death? that in the face of danger, and at the peril of their lives, they boldly proclaimed the terrors of the Lord against every immorality and abuse, and; with the most mighty and overbearing of the sons of impiety and violence, they reasoned of righteousness and temperance, and judgment to come? Was it on this account that they felt such oppressive heaviness, and such incessant sorrow of soul, for the careless and the criminal, who lived

without God in the world, and by their vice and impenitence, were treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath? Was it for this purpose that they had recourse to every method and every mean that kindness could invent, or diligence employ, to reach their hearts, to rouse them to consideration, to recover them from the evil and error of their ways, and bring them to the knowledge and obedience of the truth? Was it for this purpose that they denounced indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, and affixed the whole weight and influence of their deliberate and solemn sanction to the truth and reasonableness of the Old Testament declaration, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them?" Was it for this purpose that every sentence which they uttered, and every paragraph which they penned, breathed the most deep and indignant abhorrence of vice, and the most vehement and unconquerable attachment to holiness? Was it for this purpose, that they laboured to raise the law in the esteem, and enthrone it in the affections of all their followers? that they tell us that the law is good, that it is spiritual, that it is holy? and that whilst they lavish on the righteous and good, on the conscientious and devoted servants of the Most High, every honourable and endearing appellation; the transgressors of his law, the workers of iniquity, are branded with every de-

signation of ignominy and disgrace, that can excite our detestation of their crimes, or convey an impressive and awful idea of the meanness of their character, and the wretchedness of their state? Was it for this purpose that they insisted on the insignificance of religious rites and observances, when compared with the great and substantial duties of Christianity: declaring that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost; and that circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God? Was it on this account that they felt such concern and manifested such bitter regret for the misconduct, the inconsistencies, and falls of sincere but weak disciples, and so anxiously, and perseveringly endeavoured to persuade those who had believed in Jesus, to be careful to maintain good works? to walk worthy of their high vocation? to hold forth the word of life, and shine in the beauties of holiness? Was it for this purpose, that in their preaching, in their writings, and in their prayers they bent every power of their minds, and every affection of their hearts, to secure the sanctification of believers, and to render them sincere and without offence, blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, that they might be filled with all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ into the glory and praise of God? Was it for this that they so openly and distinctly affirm

that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness? Was it for this that they so frequently remind the faithful that they are not their own; and beseech them by all that is affecting in redemption, or grand in eternity, to glorify God in their soul, body, and spirit, and to be stedfast, and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord?

Were these the principles or the practices of men who cherished a hostility to the law, and who were embarked in a conspiracy to undermine its authority, and annul its obligation? By what means could the most zealous and enraptured friend of the law have given a more unequivocal and convincing evidence of his profound veneration for its excellence, his unfeigned devotedness to its interests, and his deep and fervent solicitude to enforce its universal observance, and secure its establishment and perpetuity, than what was actually exhibited in every part of their writings, of their labours and sufferings, by the apostles of the Son of God?

In order to evade the force of this conclusion, shall we be told, that Christ and his apostles dwell upon the paramount importance of faith? that they represent it as the turning point in religion? that they teach us to repose the whole weight of our dependence for acceptance in the sight of God upon the righteousness of the Redeemer, and not to place one particle of our trust on our personal

performances? and that they must therefore have regarded faith as all in all, and the personal holiness of believers, not only as insignificant and useless, but altogether superfluous and unnecessary?

In replying to this objection, we must remind the reader that whilst we protest against the unfair conclusion which it draws, we give the most complete admission to the truth in which it is founded, and rejoice in its certainty as the only source of hope and salvation to man. The light of the sun, at the blaze of noon, does not more thoroughly fill the horizon than the righteousness and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ pervade and animate every part of the Christian system. He is our wisdom, righteousness, and strength; he is our life, our hope, our joy, our crown in redemption; he is all and in all. And faith is the bond that unites the soul to this almighty and all-sufficient Saviour, which clothes us with his righteousness, lays hold of his strength, and puts us in possession of all the rich and invaluable fruits of his purchase. It is by faith that we live, that we walk, that we stand, that we are made the sons of God, that we overcome the world, and at last obtain the enjoyment of eternal life: for he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

But why do the sacred writers expatiate so warmly in praise of the person and work of the

Redeemer, hold faith up to such high and devout regard, and press it so earnestly and powerfully upon our study and cultivation? This they did, not only on account of the pardon and peace which it brings, but also of the holiness which it implants in the soul, and the habits of amiableness and usefulness which it produces in the life. They tell us that they did not make the law void through faith, but established the law. The faith which they preached, and which the grace of God inspires, purifies the heart and works by love, it effectually teaches him who enjoys it to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously and godly in the world. It is the mean of begetting a new and a divine life. It leads the believer to live, not to himself, but to him who died for him, and who rose again; to imitate the example of Jesus, to walk even as he also walked, and to have the same mind which was in him. It produces effects which no other principle can accomplish. When the restraints of reason and of conscience cannot bridle the corrupt appetites and passions of the man: when the terrors of law and the retributions of justice cannot check his profligate career, and keep him back from deeds of violence and baseness; the influence of faith not only strips him of all his vices and crimes, but forms him to habits of beneficence and the love and pursuit of universal holiness. Look at Onesimus. What prevented him, on the prin-

ciples of natural religion in the days of his unregeneracy, from being dutiful to his master, and true to the trust assigned him? His history, however, shews that he had disregarded every consideration of justice and fidelity, and proved a thief and fugitive, utterly unprincipled and worthless. But from the hour that he believed, he became a new man, a lover of God, a friend and benefactor to his brethren, profitable both to his master and the Apostle. Look at Zacheus. Contrary to every dictate of honour and of probity, in direct opposition to every maxim of the legal system which he professed, while in unbelief, he was an oppressor and an extortioner: but no sooner did faith take possession of his heart than it destroyed his bad practices, blasted his covetous propensities, and placed within him a spirit of liberality and kindness. “He stood, and said, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold.”

Nor are these solitary specimens of the purifying efficacy of faith. Wherever it is possessed, a similar effect is uniformly experienced. There is such a degree of moral activity and energy in this principle, that it is as impossible to lock it up in a state of idleness and uselessness in the soul, as to restrain the prolific powers of the earth amidst the genial warmth and fertilizing showers of spring. Wherever it resides, it brings down the ascendancy

of sin, it adorns the character with all the lovely fruits of righteousness, and irresistibly impels its enviable possessor to abound in every good word and work. Holiness is so utterly inseparable from the existence of faith, that in scripture, saints or holy ones, and believers are convertible terms.

On attending, therefore, to the sanctifying influence of faith, the great stress laid on this principle by Christ and his apostles, so far from forming any exception to the practical and moral tendency of their preaching, on the very contrary gives immense additional strength to all their fervid and powerful exhortations to a life of unsullied purity and of the most enlarged and active generosity and goodness.

Remembering, therefore, the strong reason which we had to expect, that if ever the law was to have been repealed or relaxed by the gospel, we would have received the most full and explicit information of the fact; and discovering on examination that the most transient or distant hint of such a singular and astonishing event cannot be traced within the limits of the New Testament; but on the contrary, finding that the most devoted and ardent admirer of the law could not have done more than what Christ and his apostles actually have done, to exalt its honour and bring all men cordially and unreservedly to submit to its authority. What other inference can we deduce from the whole but that he did not

come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; and that, so far from making it void, the gospel establishes the law?

### SECT. II.

#### Proof of the continuance of the Law, from the general nature and character of the Gospel.

Clear and convincing as the argument may appear, which has just now been advanced from the ministry of Christ and his apostles, it derives a great accession of strength from the habitual reference which, in the gospel, is made to holiness, and the important and valuable purposes which it every where attributes to good works.

If the law had been abolished, and if our faith in the Redeemer could have freed us from the obligation to cultivate the love and practice of righteousness, we certainly, throughout the whole New Testament, should never have met with a single allusion to moral duties, and far less with any panegyrics upon their excellence, with any instructions for their proper and acceptable performance, nor warm and urgent exhortations to prosecute them with diligence, and discharge them with fidelity and affection. When an instrument is superseded by the invention of a better, it is quietly laid aside as of no farther service, and no man ever dreams of employing either labour or expense to repair or to restore it. Since the adoption of the

present system of war, who ever seriously thinks of founding establishments for teaching the military tactics of Greece or Rome, or for constructing the battering rams, and other warlike engines of antiquity? Since the recent discoveries in the arts, who ever proposes to revive the clumsy and tedious processes of the ancients? Since the modern improvements in the philosophy of the human mind, what man, in his senses, would recommend a return to the barbarous logic and learned trifling of the schools? Since the introduction of a better hope, where do we ever hear one word of the authority of the Levitical law, or light on a solitary direction for the best means of complying with its rites and forms? And, if our blessed Lord had intended to sink the law in the gospel, and release his followers as completely from the spirit and the practices which it enjoins, as from the yoke of ceremonial institutions, have we not every reason to believe that he would have taken no notice whatever of its precepts, that he would have passed them by in dignified silence, and have calmly allowed them to descend into rapid and total oblivion?

If, therefore, upon examination, we shall find that, so far from treating them with contempt, or by his cold unconcern for their welfare, accelerating their march to a state of everlasting forgetfulness, he has all along manifested the most lively and tender regard for their interests, and by providing the means, and prescribing the rules by

which the deeds of morality may be most effectually fulfilled, he has adopted the most successful method to perpetuate their remembrance, and ensure their universal and cordial observance: what inference can we draw, but that he was in love with holiness, and that, though our works are not to be mixed up with our faith, nor substituted in the room of the atonement, that though they are not to be placed as the foundation of our trust, nor even blended with his righteousness, still the law is retained by the gospel, and every believer is bound, at his peril, to yield an unreserved and cheerful obedience to all its mandates? Do we, from the tendency of machinery to multiply the manufactures of our country, regard the man who first applied it, to increase the productive powers of labour, as a friend to the wealth and prosperity of the nation? Do we, from the speedy and wide diffusion of knowledge which the art of printing has created, consider its authors as the lovers of learning, and as the most signal benefactors to the literary world? And if, upon inquiry, we shall find, that our blessed Redeemer has not only retained, but confirmed the duties and obligations of morality; that he has not only tolerated and indulged them, but encouraged and approved them; that he has not only protected and sanctioned them, but has most positively and forcibly urged and commanded them: if we shall find that they are embodied in the gracious dispensation which he has pro-

mulgated, engrafted upon the principles of the gospel, and inseparably interwoven with all its doctrines and discoveries; that they form an essential part of the system, and that those who neglect them are cut off from all share in the present blessings which it imparts, and in the hopes which it unfolds: if we shall find that every subdivision of this sacred scheme is framed, for the avowed purpose of promoting the cause of holiness, of raising the standard of morals, of binding man more firmly to his duty, and of enlarging and extending the influence of practical godliness; shall not we also, on every principle of fairness and consistency, be fully warranted to maintain that the gospel has preserved the authority of the law, in all its extent and honour, and ratified and established it?

That this is precisely the conclusion to which we must come, on taking a survey of the nature and constitution of the gospel, will, I trust, appear by attending

I. To the great importance which the gospel attaches to holiness.

II. To the language which the New Testament uniformly employs, respecting the necessity of undergoing a great moral change before we can become Christians.

III. To the sentiments of respect and venera-

tion with which believers are every where represented as regarding the moral law, and the duties which it inculcates.

IV. To the interesting purposes invariably assigned to good works. And

V. To the ample provision made to secure the sanctification of believers, and promote their progress in holiness.

We are authorised to argue the continuance of the law, and the duty of every Christian to obey it,

I. From the great importance which the gospel attaches to holiness.

The great importance which the gospel attaches to holiness is manifest from the fact, that the promotion of holiness is at all times represented as one of the great and ultimate ends which God had in view in the formation of this invaluable plan of mercy, and in the arrangement of its different parts.

Do we inquire why we were made the objects of electing grace? The sacred volume informs us that God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son; and chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy, and without blame before him in love. Do we ask why Christ loved the church, and gave him-

self for it? The reply of an Apostle is, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Why is the gospel sent among a people? It is to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in Christ. Why is it applied with efficacy and power to any individual soul? The Saviour himself has furnished the answer. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." For what purpose are we blessed with the exceeding great and precious promises which it contains? That by them we may be partakers of the Divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Why are we required in every period of our lives to maintain the practice of good works? Because such is the will of God, and he has before ordained that we should walk in them. In short, if we were to examine in detail every portion of this blessed dispensation, we would find that the whole was cal-

culated and intended to advance the cause of moral goodness.

And if thus the encouragement of holiness pervades every branch of the Christian system, and constitutes one of its leading and principal designs, it surely needs no proof that the gospel holds it in the highest estimation, and that it never can be despised nor neglected with innocence or safety.

What has been stated under this article is of a general nature, and may be regarded as in some degree, introductory to what is to follow. It may, therefore, be remarked, that the truth which it enforces is confirmed,

## II. From the language which the New Testament uniformly employs, respecting the necessity of undergoing a great moral change before we can become Christians.

It represents every believer as the subject of a great change, not only in his state, but likewise in his temper and character: for it not only tells us that he is delivered from condemnation, justified by grace, admitted into the family of God, and made an heir of eternal life; but it likewise informs us that he is born again, quickened together with Christ, planted in the likeness of his resurrection, and enabled to walk in newness of life.

This change may be made at different ages, and accomplished by different instruments and means; it may be designated by various names, and a longer

or shorter period may elapse in its production: one thing however is certain, and that is, that at whatever time it takes place, or by whatever means it may be brought to pass, it consists in a remarkable and thorough moral transformation, and leaves a lasting and conspicuous effect upon the whole of the man's conduct and views. He becomes completely different from what he once was, and from what the great mass of men around him remain. Far from correcting merely a few of his outward irregularities, or suppressing the working of a few of the passions and sins within him; far from being rendered merely a reformed or an altered man, he becomes a new creature: old things pass away, and all things become new; and all things are of God. He is created again in Christ Jesus, unto good works. He drinks into the Spirit of Christ, imbibes his temper, bears his image, and follows his example. The same mind that was in Christ, is in him also; and as Christ was in the world, so is he in the world. What nobler privilege did Adam enjoy in innocence, than the possession of the image of his Creator? yet this very image, though not fully replaced, is in some degree restored to every man at regeneration: for he "puts off, concerning his former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and is renewed in the spirit of his mind; and puts on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Great however, and wonderful as this inward radical and thorough renovation is, it is to be remembered, that it is absolutely necessary to salvation. It is not desirable nor useful merely as an ornament to our character, nor as a step to enable us to reach some high and illustrious elevation in the Christian life: but is essential to the very existence of religion in the soul, and without it we have no right at all to the name of Christians. Without it we may be baptized, and attend church or meeting; without it we may take a lead in the labours of beneficence, and be foremost in the ranks of patriotism, but without it it is impossible to enjoy any spiritual blessings here, or to be admitted into the place of the just hereafter: for it is an apostle who says, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:” and it was no less than the Redeemer himself who declared, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

But unless the law had retained its place under the gospel, and preserved all its rights and prerogatives entire, what occasion would there have been for this mighty and astonishing moral transformation? If Jesus had been regardless of the interests of holiness, and if our faith in his atonement could have exempted us from the need of cultivating the love and practice of good works, what reason can we assign for his insisting so peremptorily and strongly upon the universal indispensable necessi-

ty of regeneration? If the opinion of our opponents were founded in truth, regeneration would have been altogether useless; the gates of paradise would have been thrown wide to the whole human race; moral character would have presented no bar to our final happiness, and all men without discrimination would have been ultimately saved.

So long, therefore, as the same Bible, which makes known the doctrine of justification by faith, dwells on the rigid, the absolute necessity of regeneration and sanctification, the most free and liberal manner in which salvation by grace can be published, cannot in the most slight or transient degree impair the obligation of the moral law, nor injure the interests of godliness and virtue.

And if thus we can argue the continuance of the moral law from the necessity of regeneration, the same inference may be as fairly drawn,

**III.** From the sentiments of respect and veneration with which believers, every where throughout the New Testament, are represented as regarding it and the duties which it enjoins.

On it they have lavished the most noble and affectionate encomiums. Conformity to its precepts was the object of their dearest and most fervent ambition; and nothing filled them with such bitter and penetrating distress, as a sense of their remaining infirmities, and the weakness and defects of their obedience. Though some of the

apostles were endowed with superior talents, and adorned with eminent attainments; though they had the whole of this world's distinctions and pleasures placed fully before them, and a favourable prospect of succeeding in the contest to acquire them: they felt no love for these empty honours, and these unsubstantial and perishing joys: but their admiration of holiness was profound and ardent, and their attachment to its interests was deep seated and sincere. Their heart's desire and daily prayer were to make greater progress in moral goodness, to secure the means of more extensive and permanent usefulness, and obtain a more close resemblance to the Son of God. Each could say for himself in the language of one of their number, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Their lot was hard and grievous. They were exposed to persecution and affliction, to calumny and abuse of every form and name. They were subjected to the treachery of false friends and to the obloquy and outrage of open and inveterate foes. By sufferings and reproaches they were made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. But none of these things moved them. In the midst of all their privations and distresses, we never hear them complaining of the number and severity

of their hardships, nor inquiring who would deliver them from the buffettings and scourgings, from the hunger and nakedness, from the disgrace, and bonds, and want of all things which they were condemned to endure. Amidst the heaviest pressure of calamity, they possessed their souls in patience, took pleasure in their reproaches, rejoiced in tribulation, and even gloried in the cross. But sin they regarded with feelings of unmixed detestation and horror. This they treated as an incurable evil. They trembled at its first approaches, and its presence filled them with the most pungent and overwhelming vexation and shame. They complained, that, when they would do good, evil was present with them; that there was a law in their members warring against the law in their minds, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin. Tired and disgusted with this galling and odious struggle, we find the great apostle of the Gentiles exclaiming, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

But if the law had been cancelled or relaxed, if their faith in the gospel could in the smallest degree have diminished or destroyed the necessity of personal holiness: why did they display such a contempt for this world's honours? why were they so solicitous to secure conformity to the commands of the law, and so enamoured with the duties which it prescribed? Why did they feel themselves constrained to maintain a constant watchfulness and

war against sin? Why did they so carefully shun every appearance of evil, and so strenuously labour to perfect holiness in the fear of God? Where no law is, there is no transgression. If, therefore, that law, by which is the knowledge of sin, had been annulled, on what account could they have bewailed their moral imperfections, or have felt humbled and grieved under a consciousness of their infirmities, and a sense of the presence and prevalence of their remaining corruptions? Since the accession of the Brunswick Family to the throne, what Briton blames himself for a want of allegiance to the house of Stuart? Since the introduction of modern manners, who condemns himself for a deficiency in the graceful and splendid accomplishments of the feudal ages? And if the law had been abrogated, or its obligation weakened by the gospel, on what ground could the apostles, who, above all that ever lived, were, most unquestionably, not under the law, but under grace, have experienced any more compunction or alarm for their failures to fulfil the requisitions of the decalogue, than for their neglect of the political institutions or mythological observances of the Antediluvianians?

The pungent and overwhelming sorrow, therefore, which they felt for sin, and the strong and ardent desire which they entertained for holiness, may be regarded as a demonstration of their conviction of the continuance of the law, and their duty to comply with all its dictates.

The same conclusion may, with equal safety, be drawn

**IV. From the interesting purposes invariably ascribed, in the New Testament, to good works.**

Nothing can give us a higher idea of their excellency and value, than to be told, that they are the evidence of our union to Christ, that they constitute our meetness for heaven, that they prove our right to eternal life, form the measure of our future glory, and will compose an essential part of our everlasting happiness. Yet such as these are exactly the uses which the New Testament assigns them.

**1. Holiness, or good works, are represented as the evidence of our union to Christ, and interest in the blessings of his salvation.**

From the statements of the New Testament, it is evident, that the knowledge of the relation in which Christians stand to the Saviour, is a privilege which has been attained, and which is still attainable. It speaks of a great difference betwixt the subjects of salvation and of perdition; it tells us that believers have the witness in themselves; it exhorts us to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, to prove our own selves; and admonishes us to secure the full assurance of hope, and to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure.

Such language undoubtedly implies that faith is possessed of a practical influence, and that from its

effects upon our temper and conduct, we may with ease and certainty discover its presence. If it produced no moral effect, created no specific difference betwixt those who possess and those who want it; how could it be possible to comply with the exhortation to self-examination? Where would be the justice of the expostulation, Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? What advantages could result from the most close and persevering inquiry into our religious condition? By what means could the children of light be known from the children of darkness? or the sons of God distinguished from the slaves of Satan? Where a known effect follows a known cause, from the presence of the former we may safely infer the existence of the latter: but if no sensible effect takes place, by what process within the reach of mortals, can we trace the nature or efficiency of the cause? By the thermometer, or by our feelings, we may judge of a change upon the temperature of the air: but in the present state of natural science, by what instrument or expedient can we tell whether or not the atmosphere be impregnated with contagion? If our faith be possessed of a moral influence, and leave a manifest and permanent impression upon our temper and conduct; then the injunction to self-examination is perfectly just and reasonable, and the best advantages may be confidently expected to attend the exercise. But if no moral influence accompany the gospel, and if

our faith be not naturally and necessarily connected with holy deeds, it would be as idle and useless to require us to examine ourselves, as to set us a searching the atmosphere for the infectious exhalations which it contains, or to appoint us to watch the face of the sky to detect the passage of the angels who traverse it. In such a case we might be commanded to explore our Bibles, and to examine our creeds; but to direct us to examine or prove ourselves would be utterly absurd, and its fulfilment altogether impracticable.

The exhortation in question may therefore be regarded as decisive of the fact, that there is a close and inseparable connexion betwixt faith and holiness, betwixt our union to Christ and our conformity to his image. And this inference is placed beyond the possibility of a doubt, by the plain and positive assertions of the New Testament. For unless we grant the connexion which is here maintained, why does the Bible distinguish betwixt hearing the word, and doing it? betwixt a living and a dead faith? betwixt the form of godliness and its power? betwixt real spiritual life and a name to live? Why inform us that every tree is known by its fruits? that every one that abideth in Christ, and Christ in him, bringeth forth much fruit; and that every branch that beareth not fruit he taketh away? Why teach us that believers know their calling and election? and that the Spirit himself beareth witness, with our spirits, that we are the sons of God?

And since our faith is possessed of a practical influence, and our relation to God may be ascertained from our spirit and conduct, what are the circumstances or qualities by which this high and enviable privilege may be most readily and infallibly determined? On this point the sacred oracles have left us in no uncertainty, and every sentence which they utter upon the subject tells most forcibly upon our present purpose. “Hereby we do know, that we know him, if we keep his commandments: he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him: but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous; he that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

Greater proof than this cannot be desired of the

purifying tendency of faith, and that holiness is the best, if not the only evidence, of our interest in the salvation of the gospel.

2. Holiness is represented as constituting our fitness for the services and enjoyments of heaven.

We read not only of a right to the tree of life, and of a power or privilege to become the sons of God, but likewise of a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, and of the vessels of mercy being afore prepared unto glory.

Now, this meetness or preparation must surely consist in a correspondence or suitableness betwixt our tastes, tempers, characters, and pursuits, and the place, the services, and enjoyments, for which we are destined. If our present attainments have no tendency to fit us for the allotments reserved for us in the world to come, all our labour must be thrown away in vain. It would be preposterous in a man bound for the tropics, to make an outfit for a voyage to the poles; and it would be equally ridiculous in a man who should imagine that he could qualify himself for speaking Persian or Arabic, by sitting down to the study of Gaelic; or who should fancy that he would gain a knowledge of navigation by making himself master of the rules of husbandry: and if heaven be a holy place, and its blessedness consist in holy services and in spiritual enjoyments; if its inhabitants are all righteous, and nothing can enter within its sacred confines that defileth: in what can our

meetness or preparation for it be comprised, but in the possession of holy tempers, in the cultivation of holy principles, and in the performance of holy duties? Without these, let our endowments be ever so great, or our acquirements ever so fair and imposing, we must be destitute of all congeniality for its pure pleasures and beatific employments. Without these we should be utterly unable to appreciate the worth, or relish the excellence of its sublimest visions and most exquisite and transporting delights. Without these, supposing that by a miracle or an accident we were placed alongside the spirits of the just made perfect, we would be completely miserable in the very midst of the regions of bliss.

Since, therefore, the gospel affirms that there is a preparation or fitness requisite for the inheritance of the saints in light; since it assures us that it is by patient continuance in well-doing, that we are to seek for glory and honour, and immortality; since it still avers that without holiness no man shall see the Lord: on what ground can our justification by faith be suspected of suspending or diminishing our obligations to be blameless and harmless in all manner of conversation, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God?

3. The good works of believers will be brought forward in the day of judgment as proofs of their right to the kingdom of heaven, and of the equity of that sentence by which they shall be adjudged to the enjoyment of eternal life.

The transactions of that aweful day will be all open and visible, and the rectitude of the proceedings will be fully acknowledged by all the spectators, and by all the parties in its affecting and solemn results. The heavens shall declare his righteousness; Christ shall judge the world in righteousness; and from the clear manifestation of the strict justice, which shall mark all his decisions, the day itself is emphatically called the revelation of the righteous judgement of God.

But unless the equity of the respective sentences were to be illustrated by some overt, and obvious circumstances, in the history and character of those upon whom they are pronounced, how could the issue of that day's events, "for which all other days were made," be denominated a "revelation of the righteous judgment of God?"

That the Judge accordingly will give such a conspicuous disclosure of his justice, and demonstrate the equity of his procedure, by referring to the moral character of those who receive their doom from his lips, are facts plainly asserted in the pages of inspiration. There we are told that every man shall be judged according to his works; that the good works of some are manifest before-hand, going into judgment, and that they that are otherwise cannot be hid: and our Lord himself in his description of the events of that dread day, represents the justice of the sentence as displayed, not by any secret purpose or determination of God, nor

by the faith of the believers, nor by their interest in the righteousness of the Redeemer, but by the proof which they had given of the reality of their religion by the integrity and beneficence of their lives.

And if all men shall be judged according to their works, if the virtuous conduct and benevolent labours of the redeemed shall be adduced as evidence of their union to the Saviour, and right to the kingdom of God; are we not from this warranted to infer the great importance of good works, and to maintain that faith is as uniformly and necessarily connected with holiness as life with respiration? If holiness were only an occasional attendant upon faith, it could not with any safety nor propriety be made the sole rule of decision in the day of doom. In such a case, many who by their faith in Christ were possessed of a valid and meritorious claim to heaven, from the want of this precarious and uncertain evidence of their plea, might have the dreadful misfortune to be deprived of the eternal inheritance to which in point of justice they were completely entitled.

#### 4. Our progress in holiness will form the measure of our future glory.

There can be little doubt that among the spirits of the just there shall be various degrées of honour. The exhortation, not only to lay up treasure in heaven, but also to lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come; the ad-

monition to hold that fast which we have, that no man take our crown; and to look to ourselves that we lose not the things which we have wrought, but that we may receive a full reward; the assertion that some are scarcely saved, and that others are more than conquerors; that some shall barely obtain mercy of the Lord, and that others shall have an entrance administered unto them abundantly into his everlasting kingdom: most broadly intimate, though every inhabitant of heaven shall be invested with the most resplendent dignity, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of an infinite and all-sufficient God, that still they shall possess very different degrees of glory.

And there is surely little reason to question that these distinctions will be adjusted to the progress of Christians in holiness, and to their fidelity and earnestness in the discharge of duty. Justifying righteousness certainly cannot constitute the ground of any difference in the rank nor in the enjoyments of the redeemed: for that is imparted with equal fulness and freeness to every one who partakes of it. Believers are all one in Christ: in him there is no respect of persons; and every individual therefore, who is justified at all, is justified freely from all things. But though their justifying righteousness is the same, their religious and moral acquirements are very unlike. In some the grace of God is more abundant than in others. Their labours are more numerous; their resolution more firm;

their love and zeal more steady, warm and enterprising. In the family of Christ there are babes as well as old men and fathers. In his employment he has servants of every age and standing, of every talent and accomplishment, and who with the dissimilar abilities and opportunities which they possess, exhibit very unequal attachment and devotion to his cause. And with these different degrees of assiduity and faithfulness in his work, which they at present display, it is but just and reasonable to expect that there will be a corresponding diversity in their recompense in the world to come.

This conclusion is completely supported by the language of revelation. From the parable of the pounds, where each servant was remunerated according to his industry and success; from the assurance that God is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labour of love; from the affirmation that every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour; from the repeated declaration that all shall be judged according to their works, and receive according to what they have done in the body; from the express testimony of the apostle, that “he who soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully;” it is placed beyond the shadow of a suspicion, that the different degrees of future glory will be proportioned to the

various amount of activity in duty which the saints exert, and the different attainments in holiness which they make.

And if thus the gospel authorises us to expect that our future recompence will correspond to our present fidelity and obedience; if thus it warrants us to maintain that, in heaven and through eternity, the man who shall stand nearest to the throne, and wear the most brilliant and endearing marks of his Creator's favour, is exactly the man who on earth bore the closest resemblance to Jesus, and who through life was most ardently and intensely devoted to his service: how is it possible to impeach it of immorality, or brand it with the foul and infamous charge of disparaging the worth and setting aside the necessity of good works? Unless it positively and imperatively requires their presence; unless it most sincerely and cordially approves and sanctions their performance: on what principle can we account for the unrivalled honour, and the exceeding, the eternal weight of glory which it has reserved to enoble and reward them in the world of light?

5. The possession of holiness will compose an essential part of our everlasting happiness.

It not only constitutes our meetness for heaven, but will also be retained in the kingdom of God, and prove a principal ingredient in the boundless and never-ending satisfaction and delight which we shall there enjoy.

The scriptures every where indicate that there is a close and inseparable connexion betwixt our present and our future state, and an intimate and striking resemblance betwixt the felicity which we now experience, and the blessedness which we shall hereafter possess. They tell us that he who believeth on the Son hath eternal life; that we who believe do enter into rest; that Christ liveth in us, and that we live by faith on him; that his love is shed abroad in our hearts, and that our affections are set on things above; that Christ is in us the hope of glory, that our life is hid with Christ, and that when he who is our life shall appear we shall appear with him in glory: they speak of the first fruits of the Spirit; and of the sealing of the Spirit, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. But this earnest and these first fruits consist as much in the holiness which he implants, as in the peace, the hope, and the consolation which he imparts. It is as much his office to renovate our natures, and restore us to the image of God, as to cheer our hearts and bear witness to our adoption. “ Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity,” is a sentence as deeply engraved on his seal as that other truth, “ The Lord knoweth them that are his.”

The preceding language obviously implies that, however far our future dignity and happiness may surpass all that we, in the meantime, can either

taste or conceive, still there is a close relation, and a strong similarity, betwixt our present privileges and future enjoyments; and that the bond by which they are united, is maintained by the holy principles created in the believer's heart, and the benevolent and useful habits of life to which he is formed. These are properties which abide with him, amidst the various changes and fluctuations in his lot, and retain their strength and energy amidst all the languours and decays of nature. In the world to come, the distinctions of rank and fortune may be forgotten; the acquisitions of learning, and the discoveries of science, may be obliterated; and the arts and the occupations, which were employed merely to sustain or embellish our mortal existence, must all be left behind us in the place where we pursued them. But, none of our holy dispositions, nor beneficent services, shall be overlooked nor lost. They shall all survive the stroke of death, attend us into the heaven of heavens; and, through the whole of a gladsome eternity, furnish the instruments of our most transporting employments, and the elements of our best and purest delights. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." In heaven, saints still continue the servants of the Most High, and perform his will in a manner far more thoroughly and effectually than they ever could reach on earth. There they shall see his face in righteousness, and be satisfied with his

likeness. Every spiritual weakness shall be removed; their sanctification shall be without defect or limit; and their resemblance to the moral character of the Son of God, rendered entire and full. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. As here we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall there bear the image of the heavenly Adam. When he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. With open face beholding his glory, we shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; but charity," or love, which is the fulfilling of the law and the bond of perfectness; love which is the heart, and soul, and life, and substance of genuine and practical religion, "never faileth."

And, since the mind can conceive, and God can bestow, no more exalted dignity, nor more enviable bliss than what we shall possess in heaven, by what means could the gospel confer more decisive and illustrious honour upon this lovely and inestimable principle, than by telling us, that the best and noblest ingredient in our celestial enjoyments, shall consist in the possession and exercise of holiness?

It remains for us to show that the continuance of the law may be deduced

V. From the ample provision which the gospel has made to secure the sanctification of believers, and promote their progress in holiness.

No agent is more mighty than the Holy Ghost. He enjoys an unlimited share in all the glories of the Godhead, and has all the fulness of divine honour and perfection completely at his command. The promise to believers of his presence and agency pervades both the Old Testament and the New; and, from the rich and the liberal effusion of his influences, and the important part which he sustains under this last dispensation of grace, the gospel itself is emphatically called the ministration of the Spirit. The highest value is, at all times, expressed for his presence, and the most beneficial and momentous effects, are uniformly ascribed to his sacred and mysterious operations. He is represented as a refiner and purifier; as the conqueror of the enmity of the carnal mind; and the blessed Being who, by his mild but irresistible energy, effectually applies the doctrines of salvation to the soul, and bends the wills of men to a cordial and unqualified submission to the grace and authority of God. It is he who convinces the world of unbelief and unrighteousness; it is he who quickens his people when dead in trespasses and sins; it is he who pours the light of heavenly truth around their path, and renews them in the spirit of their minds; it is he who washes them with the washing of regeneration, and baptizes them with fire; who

writes the law of God in their hearts, who perfects what concerns them, who sanctifies them wholly, and makes them a habitation of God.

For carrying into effect these high and merciful objects of his commission, he has all the dispensations of Providence under his guidance, and is invested with the administration of all the ordinances of religion, so that, if the Agent be almighty, the instruments which he uses are well adapted to his work, and such as may be justly wielded by Omnipotence. The sabbath, the services of the sanctuary, the scriptures of truth, the regular and stated, and the occasional and more extraordinary means of grace, are all subjected to his controul, and made subservient to the sanctification of the heirs of eternal life. The sabbath is appointed to detach our thoughts from the things of earth and sense, to familiarise our minds with the scenes lying on the other side of time and the grave, and to accelerate and aid our preparation for the rest which remains for the people of God. The ministers of religion are sent abroad into the world to rouse the careless, to reclaim the vicious and abandoned, to direct the inquiring into the way of righteousness and peace, and build up the believing in their most holy faith. The sacraments are instituted to promote our fellowship one with another, and confirm our union with our glorified Head. The scriptures of truth are put into our hands in order to regulate our life and conversation, and render the man of

God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

With these provisions of his grace, the vast and complicated movements of providence are made directly and powerfully to concur and co-operate. Prosperity and adversity, health and sickness, joy and sorrow, success and disappointment, are all made to contribute their respective proportions to advance the moral health, and spiritual improvement of the subjects of saving mercy. Whilst the goodness of God leads to repentance, affliction, however formidable and painful, is designed to accomplish the most eminent and lasting advantages: for, on the highest authority, we are assured, that “he chastises us, not for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.” In short, ordinances and providences, every religious and moral mean, which can either penetrate the understanding or impress the heart, are all placed under the management of this Almighty Spirit; and, by his gracious agency, overruled “for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

Take a calm and steady survey of the astonishing operations by which you are surrounded, and attend to the serious and urgent applications, which every day and every hour, are made to your

hearts and consciences, to induce you to yield yourselves up to God and devote your time and strength to the duties of religion and of life: and say, if the Eternal has abandoned the cause of holiness, and betrays any indifference to your probity and worth? Look at all that he has done in nature, in providence, and in grace, and say what more effectual and affecting means could he have employed than what he actually has adopted, to renovate our natures, and fit us through the discipline of holiness for the inheritance of the saints in light? Could he have given us a more clear and ample revelation of his will than what he has placed in his blessed word? Could we have desired sabbaths of greater length, or of more frequent recurrence, than those which he has already appointed? Could we have solicited ordinances of richer efficacy, and of a more purifying and transforming tendency than those which he has in fact planted in his church, and left for our observance and use? Could we have wished for an instrument of greater energy than the Christian ministry to break us off from our selfish and worldly pursuits, and win us to the knowledge and obedience of Christ? Could we have looked for events better calculated than those which we have personally experienced, to touch our affections, or to rouse our fears? Could we have requested to have been more painfully and severely tried, or to have enjoyed a great-

er amount of divine munificence and kindness, than what the God of mercy has already accumulated upon our heads? Or could we have presumed to have implored an agent of greater majesty than the Holy Ghost to give effect to the instruments which he has employed, and bind our souls to the love and the practice of holiness?

Look at all that he has done, and at all that he is daily doing, in nature, in providence and grace, in order to promote your improvement and secure your complete sanctification, and say if the Lord Jehovah does not only sanction and approve the holiness of his people, but is even deeply and seriously set upon its attainment? If holiness be unnecessary, why has he expended on its formation such an astonishing and immense degree of labour and care? Why has he had recourse to the inefficient and complicated process delegated to the Spirit of grace for the renovation and moral improvement of them that believe? If no spiritual nor holy effect is to be produced upon the hearts and consciences of them who shall be heirs of salvation, for what purpose is all this amazing and mighty machinery kept in such vigorous and constant motion, and such a strong and lively interest maintained by all in heaven and in earth, for the reformation and sanctification of the sons of men? If holiness be an useless or superfluous ornament in the disciples of Jesus, say why did the Spirit of God and of glory, in childhood and in early years,

strive so assiduously and earnestly by the prayers and tears of your pious parents and teachers, by the admonitions and entreaties of your godly relatives and friends to imbue your tender minds with the love of God, and join your youthful hearts in a firm and lasting alliance with truth and goodness? Why by crowding the Bible with such plain discoveries of the way of life, and with such awful remonstrances against the love and the practice of evil, does he give you such distinct and impressive warning of the dreadful inconceivable guilt and danger of transgression, and of the glory, honour, and peace awaiting every man who regards and serves the Lord? Why does he disturb your constitutional and hereditary security and sloth, by the regular return of the sabbath, and the weekly summons of the church-going bell? Why, by enjoining his ministers to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season, reprobating, rebuking, and exhorting; why, by sending them back to their sacred station, and urging them by all that they desire, and all that they dread in eternity, to give full proof of their ministry, does he command them to warn every man, and teach every man in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus?

Why, when running on in sin, and forming schemes of vicious indulgence or of dishonest gain, has this divine Spirit laboured to turn you from the evil of your purpose, by the stirring of a principle

within you, struggling against your passion and your crime, and whispering that the eye of the Eternal was upon you, and that for the very deed which you were meditating, the God of justice would soon bring you into judgment? Why by visiting you with sickness, and subjecting you to privation, suffering, or sorrow, did he remind you that this is not your rest, and beseech you to arise and prepare to meet your God? Why, by sending death out of his beaten track, and conducting him past the venerable and hoary headed veteran, select for his victim your companion and friend, who stood firm in all the false and delusive confidence of youth and of health, and before you had the least suspicion of his danger, see him writhing in all the agonies of pain, and sinking in all the feebleness of dissolution? Why, by empowering the grim king of terrors, to march forth in ghastly array, over all the strength and beauty of man, and by fixing the gloomy ensigns of his might and his triumph on the best and the dearest of all below, does he so forcibly reiterate the humbling act, that all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field, and with such solemnity admonish you to be also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh?

If all this does not demonstrate a tender and lively concern for the advancement of the interests of piety and of morals, what can it possibly

mean? If the fervent, the earnest inculcation of holiness, is not pointedly and zealously intended and prosecuted through the whole of this amazing and interesting process, what useful or rational end can we possibly assign for all its singular and affecting phenomena? In other subjects are we at liberty to infer design from the nature of the course that is pursued? From the labour and industry of the husbandman in digging, manuring, and dressing his fields, do we argue his anxiety to obtain a rich and a luxuriant crop? From the judicious and virtuous manner in which he brings up his child, and from the time spent, and the sums disbursed to command for him a thorough acquaintance with literature and science, do we gather with certainty, and affirm with confidence, that the father is ambitious to guard the moral principles, and ensure the upright and honourable conduct of his son, and confer on him all the advantages of a liberal and enlightened education? And after all that the God of heaven and of earth has done by his word, his providence, and Spirit to change and meliorate the stubborn and sterile soil of the human soul, and render it fertile in the fruits of righteousness: after he has had recourse to every method and every mean, which wisdom could suggest, or kindness employ, to train up in habits of holiness and virtue the many sons and daughters whom he is bringing to glory: after he has delegated to the Holy Ghost the business of our sanc-

tification, and entrusted him with the management and use of the most powerful and expensive moral apparatus that ever was exhibited to the universe, or framed by the hand of Omnipotence: after we find him in deep intensity watching the progress of his measures, marking minutely every effect they produce, and, on discovering the failure of his best concerted, and most beneficial plans for our repentance and amendments; can we hear him in all the bitterness of disappointed expectation enumerating the wonderful series of his benevolent labours, and inquiring, in the tone of grief and indignation, what more could have been done to his vineyard than what he had actually adopted? Can we witness all this, and yet seriously question, whether or not he values our personal goodness, and sincerely and truly longs for our conformity to the requisitions of his pure and righteous law?

With these facts before us, I do not say that a common share of piety and devotion, but I affirm, that a common portion of sense and decency compels us to maintain that the heart of the Most High is set upon our moral improvement, and that he cherishes a strong and ardent desire for the purity and worth of all the members of his ransomed family. His language and conduct rise far above the cold and bare approval and encouragement of virtue, and express, in a form too distinct and striking, either to be overlooked or mis-

understood, all the solicitude of a deep, an abiding and earnest concern for our holiness.

If he is not sincerely desirous of our sanctification, and if they who partake of the redemption that is in Christ, possess no moral superiority over their brethren, it would be exceedingly desirable to know for what purpose the Holy Ghost has been given to the Christian church, and what the grace of God does for those on whom it operates. Was it intended merely to implant some speculative notions in their heads; to enlarge the range of their information; to rectify some misplaced and disjointed articles in their creeds; to brush off a few of their external offences, and form them to habits of outward virtue and decorum? If this be any thing at all like the nature and extent of its object, this would be to do no more for us than what a bare revelation of Divine truth, unaccompanied by any supernatural influence, might easily have accomplished, and what objective truth might long ago have fully performed for apostate angels. In such a case, the ministry of the eternal Spirit surely, might with safety, have been spared; and the Bible, and its interpreters, might have been left to travel abroad through the circuit of the earth, and, without his presence and his aid, achieve the task of the world's instruction and reformation.

If personal holiness be unnecessary in them who are saved, what reason can we assign for the per-

dition of any of the children of men? It will not do to say that the reprobate are punished for their sins: for if faith produce no moral change upon them who possess it; then, since, by nature, there is no difference among the sons of Adam, and believers and unbelievers must be alike deep in rebellion and in guilt, why are they not both subjected to precisely the same condemnation? It will not do to say, that Christians are endowed with faith, and that this places them under the ample and impenetrable protection of the atonement; for if our faith contain no holy influence, and be productive of no practical results, why should our state in the sight of God, and our condition through eternity be affected by its presence or its absence, any more than by a knowledge or ignorance of the principles of mathematics or music? There certainly is virtue in the sacrifice of the Saviour sufficient to extend to all mankind; and heaven could not be more desecrated and dishonoured by the entrance of the whole, than by the admission of a part of our impure and polluted race. If sin be allowed to enter the regions of bliss, the profanation must be the same, whether it be introduced in the persons of believers or unbelievers. If, according to this hypothesis, faith be utterly unconnected with any moral or spiritual effects, why are not all men, and the devils too, who believe and tremble, admitted without distinction to

the full enjoyment of the light and glory of the celestial kingdom?

Every thing, therefore, which relates to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian church, and to his work upon the hearts of them who believe, powerfully concurs to prove the infinite importance and absolute necessity of holiness, and to demonstrate, that, so far from weakening or destroying the law, the gospel ratifies and confirms it. For if no spiritual change be accomplished upon the hearts and lives of believers; if they can be saved in their sins; if they are permitted to live to themselves, to walk according to the course of this world, and their own former vain conversation: then the presence of the Holy Spirit is totally superfluous, and all that relates to the nature and necessity of his operations under the economy of grace, and that at least amounts to one-third of the sacred volume, is at once deprived of all its meaning and use.

Thus then, notwithstanding all the strong reason which we had to expect, that, if the law had been repealed or relaxed, it and all its precepts would have been suffered to sink in oblivion, that no reference would have been made to its duties, nor any attempt employed to perpetuate their memory or prolong their observance; is it true, as we have proved, that holiness is incorporated with the whole substance and structure of the Christian dispensation, that every principle and every dis-

covery of the gospel has a direct and studied reference to the great business of practical godliness, and that the promotion of its interests constitutes one of the great ultimate ends of this sacred system? Is it true that the gospel teaches us that Christ came, not to exempt us from the obligation of the law and release us from the fulfillment of our duty, but to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works? Is it true, that it tells us that we were pre-destinated to be conformed unto the image of the Son of God, and chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and without blame before him in love? Is it true, that it insists upon the indispensable necessity of every man being born again before he can enjoy the blessings of salvation here, or obtain an entrance into the kingdom of the just hereafter? Is it true, that it holds up vice to our reprobation and abhorrence, and the law of God to our veneration and our love? Is it true, that it assures us that holiness is the only genuine infallible test of our faith in Christ? that it constitutes our meetness for heaven? that it will be produced in the day of judgment as the evidence of our right to eternal life? that it will form the measure of our future dignity and felicity? and compose an essential and principal ingredient in our ineffable and everlasting bliss? Is it true, that this same gospel informs us that the Holy Ghost has been sent down to

sanctify the souls of believers, and train them up in habits of holiness for the enjoyment of boundless and never-ending glory?

Is all this true? And who, with the volume of inspiration lying open before him, can doubt its truth? Then the gospel is a doctrine according to godliness; and it is a foul and an insufferable calumny to say, or to insinuate, that this best and noblest gift of the God of love is at war with the interests of righteousness, that it disparages the importance and utility of personal holiness; that it discourages zeal and earnestness in the discharge of any moral or religious duty; that it lays the ban and interdict of high Heaven on the performance of good works; and lest the cultivation of practical goodness should beget a spirit of legality and self-dependence, that it leaves its votaries the free indulgence of their indolence and crimes. What more interesting and useful purposes could the most enthusiastic admirer of morality arrogate to it than what are actually assigned it by the Lord Jesus Christ? or what more potent and useful auxiliary of the eternal law, could its most enraptured and devoted adherent desire, than the blessed, though defamed and injured, gospel of peace?

## SECT. III.

The consistency betwixt Salvation by grace, and the practice of good works.

FROM a supposed incompatibility betwixt justification by faith, and the obligation to practise good works, many imagine that the preceding reasoning, notwithstanding all the apparent force and soundness which it possesses, may be completely overset by the warmth and frequency with which the New Testament asserts the necessity of a free and gratuitous salvation, and the animated and glowing eloquence with which it expatiates on the greatness, the fulness, and the riches of redeeming grace.

Those accordingly, who deny it to be the duty of man to obey the will of his Creator, either from the idea of exalting the value of the Saviour's righteousness, or from the hope of obtaining a sanction for their carnality and crimes, have long agreed in strenuously contending, that, though the law has not been openly and avowedly repealed, its rights have been secretly infringed, and its authority silently revoked by the nature and tendency of the doctrines which the gospel inculcates, and that, in spite of all that we can urge upon the advantages or the necessity of holiness, the statements of Christ and his apostles respecting the leading and fundamental article in the Christian system, salvation by grace, just as ine-

vitably undermine the foundations of morality, and as effectually release us from the need of devoting ourselves to the love and practice of godliness and of good works, as if the decalogue had been annihilated, and every trace and vestige of it expunged from the sacred pages.

Though, therefore, with the conclusion of the former section we would gladly have closed the evidence for the continuance of the law under the gospel, in order to consolidate the proof which has been already advanced of the spiritual nature and design of the gospel, and to shew the unspeakable importance and the absolute necessity of cultivating holiness of heart and of life, it becomes imperatively incumbent on us to employ a few pages to the exclusive examination of the validity and strength of this formidable, and sweeping objection.

If, while it professes to respect and venerate the law, the gospel has tacitly repealed it, it must be either by setting aside the necessity of personal holiness, or by weakening the obligations to obedience, or by lowering the standard of morality, or by enfeebling the motives by which the love and practice of piety and virtue are most powerfully and successfully enforced. If it has not produced any of these consequences, it is not easy to conceive how the gospel, in the slightest degree, can have interfered with the authority of the law, or injured the cause of genuine holiness.

To the honest and candid then of every class and description, we make our serious and earnest appeal, and ask whether this representation in substance, or in shadow, be possessed of the most distant resemblance to the spirit and design, to the tendency and effect of the glorious gospel of the blessed God?

I. Has it been asserted that, by teaching that we are justified by faith in the righteousness of the Redeemer, the gospel virtually supersedes the necessity of personal holiness, and in its native legitimate consequences, contributes to establish the conclusion, that our own obedience is altogether superfluous and useless?

To meet this appalling objection, we have only to remember the reason why our deeds of righteousness are excluded from the business of our justification, and that we are compelled to accept salvation as the gift of grace. It is not because God is regardless of the interests of morality, and careless whether or not the heirs of life yield obedience to the precepts of his law; but, because his law is so pure and spiritual, so holy and unbending in its requisitions, that our poor polluted services, our paltry and contemptible performances can never reach the high standard which it has fixed, nor render a full and adequate satisfaction to its just and reasonable demands. Since the obedience of a fallen creature, however sincere and steady, must necessarily, at the very best, be imperfect and de-

fective, if the gospel had broached the tenet that the sinner can be justified either in whole, or in part, by his moral duties and religious performances; then, in the worst and most offensive sense of the terms, the gospel would have been chargeable with subverting the foundations of godliness, and encouraging men to undervalue and despise the strong and eternal obligations of the law. But when the gospel advances no such assertion nor insinuation; when it broadly and uniformly affirms the very reverse; when it displaces our works of righteousness from the office of justifying us, not because God is indifferent about their presence or absence, but simply and entirely, because they are too insignificant and mean, too low and worthless ever to meet the high and holy, the spiritual and comprehensive requisitions of his law; is it not clear and indisputable, on the very first sight and statement of the fact, that so far from making the law void, the gospel ratifies and confirms it, magnifies and makes it honourable?

In a state of rectitude, obedience to the divine law appears to have been enforced upon more noble and generous principles than the selfish and mercenary motive of man's recommending himself to the approbation and favour of his Maker, and purchasing a title to eternal life. Being the creature of God, and deriving every enjoyment and comfort from his bounty, man was bound by every

consideration of justice and of gratitude to yield a cordial and unqualified submission to all his will; and from the inherent essential purity of the Divine nature, without holiness it was utterly impossible for man ever to relish or enjoy the sublime and sacred sources of delight and of bliss to be found in intercourse with the Most High, or in the possession of celestial felicity and glory. And if holiness, even in Eden and in innocence, was absolutely requisite to fit us for his presence, and qualify us for enjoying the communications of his friendship and love, is it possible that it can be less necessary for the attainment or fruition of these inestimable blessings now? Are base passions and unhallowed tempers the bane and scourge of men in a state of nature? and can they be less galling or pernicious to the soul that is in a state of grace? Was it on account of our guilt and crimes that we were driven out from the presence of the Lord, and subjected to the signal and awful manifestations of his indignation? and can we expect the removal of his displeasure, or the restoration of his favour, by persisting in the practices which first alienated his affection, and exposed us to the overwhelming operations of his wrath? Can the wanderer regain the right road by obstinately advancing in the path which first led him astray? Can the patient secure the abatement of his pain, or the recovery of his health, by madly persevering in the courses which first brought on his malady? and can a sinner more rationally ex-

pect the suspension of the anger of the Most High, or the free and uninterrupted flow of his kindness, by impiously retaining the vicious tempers and criminal pursuits by which he first forfeited his friendship, and laid himself open to the tremendous visitations of his vengeance ?

If obedience had been originally enjoined merely in order to recommend us to the favour of the Almighty, and secure a right to everlasting happiness ; then whenever it was stripped of this function it might with some propriety have been alleged that it was deprived of its use and had lost its obligation : and if sin had done us no other mischief than merely to expose us to punishment, then the Antinomian tenet would naturally and unavoidably have followed, that the substance and essence of our salvation consist in the pardon of our offences ; and, therefore, if our crimes are forgiven, we need give ourselves no further concern about our transgressions, nor exert any activity or diligence in the cultivation of godliness, and in the practice of good works. But if the gospel uniformly represents holiness to be as essential as the forgiveness of sins, to the possession of happiness ; if it at all times represents sin as a malignant and comprehensive evil, which brings along with it, not only the loss of innocence and obnoxiousness to punishment, but likewise the depravation of our nature, and an utter incapacity while labouring under its virulence to enjoy any genuine or lasting felicity and

peace; and, if from the nature of things, we also know that the carnal and depraved can neither see God nor enjoy him, amidst all the rich and precious benefits which the gospel unfolds, and all the fulness of pardon and of peace which it proclaims, how is it possible that these can ever supersede the necessity of personal worth, or give those who embrace its gracious provisions the slightest encouragement to indulge a licentious disposition or continue in the love and practice of iniquity? If the inhabitants of an island have been obliged to prosecute trade and commerce not only in order to pay a tribute to their prince, but likewise to provide the means of their own subsistence; because the sovereign remits the duties which he had previously levied, does that supersede the necessity of labouring in future for their own support and comfort? And because personal obedience is not exacted now as the condition of our acceptance with God, does that annihilate the other uses which it served, or in the smallest degree relieve us from the necessity of cultivating personal holiness for the purpose of maintaining the spiritual life, health, and prosperity of our souls? If exercise and temperance are necessary not only for the removal of sickness, but likewise for the preservation of our bodily welfare; granting that a patient were recovered from a dangerous illness by the uncommon skill and attention of his physician, or even by a miracle, would the extraordinary nature of

his cure free him in the smallest measure from the necessity of attending, in future, to the means requisite for preserving his health and safety? And because the salvation of the gospel brings the believer the full and free remission of all his sins, does it therefore set aside the necessity of guarding, for the time to come, against that evil and accursed thing which is the root of all bitterness, and the very bane, disgrace and plague of his soul?

The salvation which the Lord Jesus Christ has wrought out is exactly adapted to our condition; and, indeed, without a suitableness to our wretched circumstances, it would have been utterly impossible to have derived any real benefit from his incarnation, and his sufferings and death would have been all sustained in vain. Unless the remedy be proportioned to the complaint, no cure can be effected: and unless the gospel had provided for the whole extent of our guilty ruin, no solid nor lasting advantage could have been obtained from all the rich and invaluable blessings which it contains. If it were possible to suppose that, without any disorder in our affections or any depravity in our natures, we had been involved in consequence of the fall, merely in mistake or in ignorance, or that we had been seduced into a few practical transgressions and exposed to some slight expressions of our Creator's displeasure: all that, in such a case, could have been necessary for the restoration of our happiness, would have been

the removal of the particular evil by which we were affected. But if we find that there is something in our situation far more culpable, calamitous and dreadful than a little involuntary ignorance, or a few occasional offences: in order to give us salvation with eternal glory, however important and desirable they may be, something far more spiritual, and practical, and that possesses a more direct and powerful operation upon our persons becomes indispensably necessary, than the bare erasure of the sentence of condemnation, and the enlightening of our minds in things sacred and divine. If a patriot find his country, not only involved in war, and famine, but likewise in pestilence, what would the restoration of peace or of plenty avail, so long as the plague continued to spread abroad its awful and wide wasting desolations? If a physician find his patient suffering not only from deafness and a weakness of vision, but also consumed by sickness or harassed by phrenzy, what would it signify to the man to regain the sound and perfect use of his ears or his eyes whilst he continues to be spent by hectic, or distracted by madness? And if the Bible tells us, and if our souls and consciences bear testimony to the truth of its mournful and humbling averments, that not only are our understandings darkened through the influence of vice, and our conduct disgraced and stained by the pollutions of wickedness, but that our minds are also alienated from the love of God, and that our hearts

are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; and if we also know that this alienation of mind, and this hardness and depravity of heart constitute our disgrace and bane, the substance and strength of all our misery and woe; what would it profit us, though our irregular practices were reformed, and our errors and prejudices all completely dissipated; though our lives were to be rendered most correct, and sober, and composed to all the decent and faultless formality of a pharisee; though the light of heaven were to pour its brightest radiance upon our path, and our understandings were to be crowded with all the intelligence of a seraph; what would all this avail whilst the worst and most terrible part of our disorder remains, whilst the seat and centre of our disease are untouched, whilst passion and crime are carrying on their destructive ravages in the interior regions of our souls, whilst our faculties and affections are left under the enslaving tyranny of corruption, and our hearts retain all the malignity and impurity of a fiend? When a restless and froward child, by violating his parent's commands, has fractured a limb, or fallen into the fire, what would it signify to him to see his father coming forward with a look of hypocritical mildness, and to hear him in a tone of whining benignity and tenderness, declaring that he fully and frankly forgave him, while nothing was done to mitigate his pain, and the little sufferer was coolly left to writhe in all the agony of torture? What benefit

could a criminal derive from the clemency of his prince, who humanely cancels the sentence of death, whilst he is sinking under a mortal distemper contracted in the commission of the outrage for which he had forfeited his life, and which will inevitably land him in eternity before the arrival of the day on which, by the decision of the law, he was doomed to die ? And granting that it were possible, which in fact it is not, to separate justification and sanctification, the pardon of our offences from holiness of heart and life, so long as sin retains its degrading and destructive nature, so long as it continues to be our disgrace and bane, so long as it excludes us from the society of a perfect and of a holy God, so long as it unfits us for the services of a blessed and holy heaven, so long as it entails on its hapless victim remorse, shame and wretchedness : though from the midst of the eternal throne a voice were at this moment to proclaim to each of the sons and daughters of Adam, “ Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you,” what advantage could we reap from this most absolute and plenary obliteration of our guilt, whilst sin maintains its seat within us, and our natures all over are fermenting, rankling, and festering under its foul, malignant, and baneful strength and virulence ?

Without undergoing a change upon our character, it is utterly impossible that any alteration upon our state can make us truly and permanently happy. The sinner must be born again and renewed

in the spirit of his mind; he must have a taste to relish, and a capacity to appreciate the nature and value of the salvation which the gospel brings, before he can enjoy the peace, the consolation and the hope which it imparts. How, in the nature of things, is it possible that the titular possession of the gospel and of all the blessings which it contains, can render an unholly man happy, any more than the nominal possession of wealth and erudition, can enrich the poor or confer wisdom or learning on a dunce? A telescope may be useful to the near or the dim-sighted, but what service can it render to the blind? And pardon, accompanied with the renovation of our nature, is of unspeakable, of immense importance to the possessor; but what benefit can it bestow on a soul that is dead in trespasses and sins?

Without a change, and that too of the most signal and comprehensive description, upon the habits and dispositions of his heart, what delight could a sinner find in the possession even of heaven itself? Its great excellence and glory consists, not in its local position, nor the beauty, the extent, or the grandeur of its scenery, but in the presence of a Holy God, in the society of holy creatures, and in the performance of spiritual and holy services. Now, it is well known that all happiness is comprised in the adaptation of the object, to the taste and faculties of its possessor. What signify the comforts of polished life to a rude and uncultivated barbarian?

or a sumptuous banquet to a man whose appetite is gone? or the charms of a concert to him who has no ear? Supposing, therefore, that it were possible for an unsanctified sinner to gain admission within the gates of the Jerusalem above; that it were possible to lift him up from the debauchery and revelry of a tavern; or to transport him from the eager pursuit of his vicious schemes, and fraudulent, and malevolent purposes, and with all his sordid principles, and depraved passions hanging round him, to plant him, just as he is, in the midst of the general assembly and church of the first born; what enjoyment could he derive from all the blissful visions, which every where would spread their overpowering loveliness and magnificence before him, and from all the sacred and delightful services, which with unremitted earnestness and evergrowing zeal, would incessantly be carried on by all the glorified hosts around him? The devotion would be too exalted, the atmosphere of ardent adoring piety would be too pure, and the temperature of sublime enraptured gratitude and praise too high, for his gross habits and dull and heavy powers: exhausted and overcome by the fervours of an element for which he had acquired no congeniality, and by the employments of a place for which he possessed no relish, he would sink oppressed beneath the splendours of celestial glory, and pine away with anguish in the very seat and centre of boundless and unmixed bliss.

The resources of Omnipotence are far beyond our conception, and are utterly inexhaustible. By a simple act of his will, Jehovah can give sight to the blind, feet to the lame, health to the sick, and the power of speaking languages which the orator never learned. But if Omnipotence have no limits, it at least has rules; and by the present constitution which God has prescribed to nature, we know that it is impossible for a man to see without eyes, to walk without the power of motion, to converse without the organs of speech, or enjoy health and ease at the very time that he is languishing with disease, or convulsed with pain; and by the same constitution of nature, we know that it is as impossible for a creature to enjoy any genuine happiness, whilst destitute of real holiness. If such had been his pleasure, for ought that we can tell, God could have made a sun which could have enabled even the blind to see, and he could have endowed men with the power of uttering articulate sounds without any of the organs of speech: but we perfectly know that this is what he has not done. And for any thing that we can affirm to the contrary, if such had been his pleasure, he also possessed the power to render sin and happiness perfectly compatible: but we also most fully know, that this is what he has not done: and every thing in the constitution of nature concurs to prove, that whilst the present laws continue to regulate the moral world, it is as impossible to reconcile the possession of happiness with the love and practice

of vice, as the enjoyment of sight with the want of eyes, or the faculty of distinct articulation, with the want of the organs of speech. Men may delude themselves with whatever visionary hopes of safety they choose, and attempt by whatever schemes they fancy most successful to defeat the counsels of the Most High, and overturn his fixed and immutable decrees: but whilst he fills the throne of heaven, and remains the perfect and all glorious Being that he is, over the whole extent of creation, and down through every succeeding age in eternity, these momentous declarations of his word, will retain the whole of their force and truth, “There is no peace to the wicked, and without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

Though therefore the gospel dethrones good works from the office of justifying the sinner, by insisting on their absolute indispensable necessity as an essential part of our salvation and the qualifying mean of enjoying present and future felicity, it does not annihilate their use, nor detract one atom from the greatest amount, which their most enthusiastic admirers can desire, of their excellence and value.

If the gospel has not superseded the necessity of personal purity and worth, has it

**II. Weakened or destroyed our obligations to obedience?**

The grand characteristic of the gospel is the atonement, or the substitution of the sufferings and

sacrifice of the Son of God in our room, that by the believing reception of this provision of infinite beneficence and mercy, we might be delivered from the dreadful consequences of our transgressions, and admitted to the enjoyment of spiritual peace on earth and the possession of everlasting blessedness in heaven.

But though this transaction affords a matchless manifestation of the kindness and compassion of the Most High, and is fraught with the most rich and invaluable blessings to man, is there any thing in it which invalidates the authority of the moral law, or diminishes our obligation to receive and observe it? It clearly recognizes the fact that the law was previously binding on the heart and conscience of every human creature; for unless we were antecedently bound to obey it, what occasion was there for the Son of God and the Lord of glory to become the Redeemer of our race, and by his own sufferings and death expiate that guilt which we had contracted entirely by the violation of its precepts? If the principal is not in arrears, there is certainly no reasonableness nor equity in exacting payment from his surety: and if we were not by nature under the bond and obligation of the law, where was the wisdom or the mercy of appointing a Mediator to redeem us from its condemnation and its curse? Every fact, therefore, which proves that provision has been made in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver us from the penalty

due to our trespasses, demonstrates, in the most impressive and irresistible form, that we were previously amenable to its authority, and bound to submit to all its injunctions.

And if we were previously under its authority, the only question which we have now to put, and it is a question of no small moment, is,—Can our deliverance from the sentence of condemnation, incurred solely by our violation of its enactments, diminish our obligation to obey its demands, or free us from the necessity in future of maintaining a life of piety and virtue? Because an intelligent friend has providentially preserved a neighbour from falling a sacrifice to the incautious use of arsenic, does the seasonable and successful administration of an antidote indicate that there is nothing dangerous nor deleterious in the nature of poison? Because a liberal benefactor, by his unexpected interposition, has rescued a spendthrift from bankruptcy or a dungeon, does it follow from this disinterested payment of his debts, that there is nothing foolish nor ruinous in a life of extravagance and waste? And because the Lord Jesus Christ, by his own obedience and death, has made atonement for our offences, and in a manner so affecting and unlooked for, has freed us from the dreadful doom which we deserved; does this afford us any encouragement to trifle with temptation, or to venture upon that abominable and forbidden thing which Jehovah hates, and which naturally and ne-

cessarily tends to entail disgrace and wretchedness, wrath and everlasting ruin upon the soul?

So far from detracting from the dignity, or weakening the obligation of the law, the death of the Redeemer illustrates its reasonableness, and gives an inconceivable majesty and force to each of its righteous and holy mandates. The divinity of his person, and the depth of his debasement proclaim the enormity of our guilt, and the infinite danger attending the breach of its just and sacred requisitions. And because we are now reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and our redemption has been secured by means so unparalleled and so utterly astonishing, are we less bound to love and serve him now, than when we were in a state of guilt and condemnation, of total wretchedness and ruin? Supposing that no Redeemer had ever visited and blessed our globe, supposing that the whole posterity of Adam had been left to bear, in their own persons, all the weight of vengeance due to their own trespasses and sins; what effect could such a deplorable and awful condition have produced upon our moral obligations? Would our subjection to hopeless, endless misery have exempted us from obedience to a single precept in all the decalogue, or freed us from a single duty binding on man in his situation of primeval purity and bliss? No: the law of God cannot forgo its rights in consequence of a change on the character and condition of its subjects. Its claims upon the ho-

image and obedience of the creature remain for ever the same. In every stage of his existence, and in every place of his residence, every creature is bound to love God and serve him with his whole heart and soul. And if thus, even in a state of pure unmitigated wretchedness and horror, we should have been bound to have yielded unqualified and cordial submission to every precept of his law; is it credible now, when we are made the objects of unmerited and marvellous loving kindness, that his law has lost its authority, and that we owe him no duty nor allegiance at all? When his mercy is at the highest, and his goodness and grace have been manifested in a manner the most affecting and endearing; is this exactly the time when our obligations to his compassion and generosity are fewest and our expressions of gratitude and obedience are to be at the lowest? Are those to love him least who have had most forgiven? and those, on whose heads the most signal and overwhelming marks of his beneficence have been accumulated, to render him the most paltry and unworthy returns? Are we to consider ourselves obliged to our benefactor for the advance of ten pounds; but, by adding at our request ten thousand to the sum, does he extinguish the whole of the debt, and forfeit in future every claim to our affection and respect? By the grand law of universal love, are we bound to cultivate a spirit of kindness and good will towards the man with whom we have the slightest acquaintance?

tance, and the most rare and transient intercourse ? but after this stranger, by an act of the most generous and daring intrepidity, has preserved our life at the peril of his own, are we from that day and downwards to disregard all the calls of humanity and justice, and treat him with the most insulting and insufferable insolence and scorn ? Was the Jew bound to love the Samaritan because he was his neighbour ? but from the day that he was rescued from death by the humane attentions of this hospitable traveller, was he relieved from every call to cultivate a spirit of benevolence, or perform acts of civility and benignity to this compassionate and liberal alien ? When sweltering in the brick kilns of Egypt, and groaning beneath the lash of their merciless task masters, were the Israelites bound to hearken to the voice of the Most High, and keep all his commandments and statutes, and ordinances and judgments, and do them ? but were their obligations to love and serve him cancelled or diminished, after he had by a strong hand and an outstretched arm delivered them from the iron furnace, and the outrage and tyranny of Pharaoh, led them through the untrodden paths of the deep, conducted them by miracle across the wilds of the Arabian wilderness, and planted them in safety and in triumph amidst the beauties and fertility of Palestine ? And were we by the constitution of our nature, by the very law of our creation, by that law whose high authority extends over every quarter

of the universe, and reaches the creature in every period of his existence, and in every place of his residence whether in heaven, on earth or in hell; were we, by the distinct and positive enactments of that law, bound to love God with our whole heart and soul, and devote to his service, and employ in his praise, every moment of our time, and every particle of our strength : and though he has not lost the smallest fraction of his rights, nor forfeited a single title to the entire possession of all that we have and are ; but on the contrary by the death of his Son for our redemption, has given to each of his claims an unknown and inconceivable additional force ; instead of converting this affecting and amazing fact to the great purpose of strengthening our holy resolution and activity in his employment, instead of applying it as a reason for clothing our religious efforts with an irresistible decision and vigour ; instead of arguing from the sacrifice of the Saviour that we are not our own, but are bought with a price, and thereby bound to glorify God in our soul, body and spirit which are his ; are we to draw an inference precisely the reverse, and to conclude, because the God of grace has in mercy done so much to relieve our wretchedness and misery, therefore we are to do nothing either to mark our submission to his will or attest our thankful sense of his marvellous unsearchable generosity and grace? Because he has done so much to maintain his dominion over

man, and bind our hearts in the most strong and tender attachment to his cause; are we on that very account to disregard his authority, and allowed with impunity to trample on the plainest rules of duty, and the most positive and commanding intimations of his pleasure? Is it just now, when to the demands of justice he has added all the weight and influence of boundless beneficence and infinite love, that we are to suppose ourselves released alike from the requisitions of the law, and the claims of the gospel, from the obligations of duty, and the calls of gratitude; and instead of being laid under new and more powerful obligations to spend and be spent in works of faith, and in labours of love, we are to believe that we are left at liberty to live to ourselves, and break through the strong army of motives and of means, which, if it had not been for this matchless display of Divine benignity and mercy, would have followed us through every period of our existence, and bound us to unreserved compliance with all his commands, and the most absolute and indefatigable devotedness to his service? Is it credible, that the exercise of beneficence, which enhances the demands of one man upon the kindness and affection of another, diminishes the claims of the Deity; and that when, by an immense display of benevolence, the sum has swelled to infinity, it is exactly then that his title becomes extinct, and all his rights and prerogatives expire?

The man who slighted the overpowering influence of redeeming love, is insensible to the force of moral motives. Having succeeded in resisting the most mighty and commanding consideration that Omnipotence can employ, it is not to be expected that he can be impelled to the performance of his duties, by the influence of feebler and inferior reasons. Every exhortation and argument that kindness can suggest, or that justice or goodness can urge, must be thrown away in vain. To the guilt and baseness of despising the calls of reason, and the obligations of equity, he adds the crime and infamy of contemning all the tender and irresistible demands of gratitude and love.

When, therefore, the nature and design of the gospel are calmly and judiciously considered, so far from weakening or destroying the obligations of the law, it is found to contribute unspeakably to strengthen and confirm them.

And since it has admitted the equity of all the claims of the Divine law, and retained the necessity of cultivating a life of personal piety and goodness, will any have the hardihood to affirm

**III.** That it has lowered the standard of morality, or reduced the amount of the homage and obedience which man originally owed to his Maker?

Is this any thing at all like the inference which, it might have been expected, would have been drawn from the sublime and spotless example which our Saviour set; or the spiritual and elevated sys-

tem of morals which he inculcated ? from the tremendous denunciations which he uttered against the indolent, the hypocritical, and wicked ; or the liberal and affectionate benedictions which he pronounced upon the humble, the meek, the faithful, the obedient, and the pure in heart ? He, himself, was holy, harmless, and undefiled : he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth : the law of God was in his heart, and its benign and exalted principles were every day illustrated and adorned by his engaging and heavenly life. From the manger to the cross, he carried about with him, in distinct and lively manifestation, the holy and beneficent spirit which pervades and animates every part of this sacred code. In his own person he exhibited a bright pattern of the most ardent piety and unbending integrity : his conduct, through the whole of life, bespoke a sensibility, alive to the sufferings of all the wretched ; a generosity which knew no bounds, and “a well doing that never was weary.”

His doctrine was in perfect harmony, and possessed the most glorious agreement, with this lovely and illustrious example of unclouded excellence, which, in every situation, and under the most bitter and rancorous opposition, he so uniformly displayed. His constant and unwearied aim was to illustrate the purity of the law, vindicate the reasonableness of its precepts, and enforce on every Christian, an undeviating obedience to all that it

enjoins. Attend to the scope and spirit of his teaching, and say, when were its requisitions more fully explained, or more powerfully inculcated, than in his ministry? When did it ever impose upon its subjects a greater degree of seriousness, or fervour in devotion, than when he declared, in words whose authority shall reach the utmost ends of the earth, and last through all the succeeding ages of time, that God is a Spirit, and that they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth? When did it ever go deeper into the heart, or lay a more firm and forcible restraint upon the very first risings and movements of disorderly passion, than when he affirmed that causeless anger is in danger of the judgment; and that a forbidden desire is as positively sinful, and will as certainly meet with punishment, as the deliberate and open perpetration of actual crime? When was resentment ever placed under more vigorous controul, or the forgiveness of injuries more strongly and imperatively prescribed, than when he said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you?" When was a spirit of more expanded liberality recommended, or the duties of social virtue more fully or authoratively urged, than when he taught us to regard every man as a neighbour, and commanded us to do to others as we would wish that they should do to us? When did the law ever

fix the standard of obedience higher, or require a greater amount of spirituality and purity of motive, than when he instructed us to seek the honour that cometh from God only ; taught us to pray that the will of God may be done on earth, as it is in heaven; and exhorted us in our spirit and practice to imitate no lower a pattern than that of the great and ever blessed God ; to be merciful as he is merciful, and perfect even as he is perfect ? When were the duties which we owe to God and to man, in a manner more distinct and clear, or in a form more absolute and comprehensive, impressed on every conscience, and made binding on every human soul, than, when in answer to the captious and insidious question, Which is the great commandment of the law ; the incarnate Redeemer delivered this admirable and interesting response, “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment ; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self ? ” What more than this did the law of God originally exact ? What more than this could it demand from the highest seraph before the eternal throne ? What more than this could the ever blessed Jehovah expect or desire from the best and noblest inhabitant of creation ? Yet all this, without the abatement of a single article, or the want of the smallest fraction, is declared, by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, to be binding on

each of his followers, and by his own authority, is peremptorily and positively exacted from us and from all mankind.

And if the gospel has not superseded the necessity of personal obedience, nor weakened the obligations of the law, nor reduced the standard of morality, will any presume to affirm that it has

IV. Enfeebled any of the strong and commanding motives, by which the cultivation of holiness, and the practice of good works are most powerfully and successfully enforced ?

By excluding good works from the office of justifying the sinner, has the gospel placed us under the jurisdiction of laws less exact and unyielding than those which were binding on man in innocence, and which, if he had remained in integrity, would have retained their obligation for ever ? Was he then accountable to a tribunal more august and awful, than that which is now erected for the cognizance of our conduct, and the decision of our everlasting fate ? Has Jehovah now abandoned the distribution of justice, and entrusted the execution of judgment to some of the subalterns of his administration, who wait at a humble and fearful distance round his glorious throne ? Was an interest in his friendship more useful and desireable, or the exercise of his displeasure more a matter of dread to man, at the first moment of his formation, than they are at this present hour ? Could the Almighty then have threatened the

rebellious and disobedient with a hell more horrid and intolerable, than that which just now is in active operation for the endless punishment of those who have a form of godliness, but are destitute of its power; who profess the gospel, while by their worldly and vicious lives they disgrace it; who talk of their faith, and vaunt of their knowledge and attainments, while they are living to themselves, and enslaved by base principles and unmortified passions? Can any thing in the lot of a rational immortal be more hideous and tremendous, than to be banished from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, and sent away, under his curse, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? Yet all this shall be the portion of the worldly and the worthless, of the impenitent and hardened, and of them who profess to know God, while in works they deny him; being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Shall we be told that the force of this argument is neutralized, by the tenet which is supposed necessarily to result from the full admission of the doctrines of the gospel, that sin cannot injure the elect; that they who are once elected are always beloved; that they who have once been the subjects of grace, shall never be permitted to draw back to perdition?

We rejoice in the fact, that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance; that he rests in

his love, and hateth putting away. But whilst we admit, in the most ample and unlimited extent of the terms, that the purpose of God, according to election, shall stand ; we reject with detestation, the foul and impious charge that this truth is at war with Christian watchfulness, or gives those who embrace it the slightest encouragement to indulge in carelessness and sin. Men may delude themselves as they choose about the safety of the elect, and the immutability of the Divine decrees ; but so long as they live in vice, we would like to know what scriptural authority they possess, for the final enjoyment of salvation. When told that whom God did foreknow, he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son ; and that our calling and election are to be made sure, by adding to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity : while destitute of the holiness and spirituality which the gospel inspires, what evidence can they produce, from the pages of inspiration, of their being within the limits of the protection and security which the gospel affords ? The very same Bible which proclaims the delightful fact, that to his sheep Christ will give eternal life, and that they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands ; also tells us, that if any man draw back, the Lord will have no pleasure in him. The very same Bible which pours such rich and abundant benedictions upon the heads of

the humble, the faithful, and the holy, denounces the most terrible threatenings, without restriction, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. It does not say, "If the reprobate and unbelieving live after the flesh, they shall die; to them, the wages of sin are death; without holiness, the reprobate and unbelieving shall not see the Lord." No such narrow and miserable distinctions obscure and blot its pure and impartial pages. In language the most comprehensive and indiscriminate, and every way worthy of the majesty and equity of its Almighty and Righteous Author, it declares, and let every one who reads, seriously ponder the import of its declarations, "If ye" who are in Christ Jesus, and to whom there is no condemnation, "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: The wages of sin," without respect of persons, to every child of Adam, "is death: and without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." And let it not be forgotten, that, as if on purpose to cut off the hope that a sound creed will prevent the consequences of an immoral life, it expressly affirms, that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

And if God, on the morning of man's formation, could not have threatened him, in case of revolt, with a hell more gloomy and horrid, than that which he has actually fitted up for the reception of the impenitent and hardened under the

gospel; could he then have enriched and compensated his faithful and obedient subjects with a heaven more splendid and blissful, than that which he has now provided, for the everlasting habitation and rest of the humble and devoted followers of the Lamb? Could the eyes of innocence, from the lofty elevation of the bowers of paradise, have descried, in the regions of futurity, any dignity more exalted and endearing than that which the Lord Jesus Christ has placed in the full view of all the intrepid and determined adherents of the cross? “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” Could the confines of celestial purity and peace have furnished to upright and holy men, any seat more honourable and glorious, or any possession more immense and invaluable, than those with which Immanuel engages to distinguish the conquering Christian? “To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that overcometh, shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

More than this, the heart of a creature never could desire; more than this, the God of love never could confer: yet all this our blessed Redeemer has pledged himself to bestow on them that love him, and are devoted to him. For

though their title to these inestimable privileges and exalted honours, is founded entirely in his own righteousness; yet, it is to be remembered, that it is only by patient continuance in well-doing, that these sublime and unutterable dignities and blessings can be enjoyed; and that the amount of our blessedness and glory there, shall be in proportion to our moral and religious attainments here. By an authority no lower than that which informs us that by grace we are saved, we are told, that as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead; and are assured, that he who soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.

Thus then on examining the subject, we can discover no disagreement betwixt the doctrine of salvation by grace, and the most active and persevering practice of good works; and find, notwithstanding all the clamour against the antinomian tendency of the gospel, the most abundant reason for affirming, that, instead of weakening the obligation of the law, it in reality establishes it; and gives immense additional force to the strong and eternal ties which bind every man to the love and service of the Lord. So long as holiness continues an indispensable qualification for the enjoyment of religious blessings here, and the possession of the honours and delights of a blissful immortality hereafter; the doctrine of salvation by grace can

never supersede the necessity of personal piety, nor afford its votaries the slightest pretext for indulging in carelessness and sin. So long as the gospel bears on its front, as its grand distinguishing peculiarity, that the scheme of redemption was employed to expiate the guilt of our transgressions, and render the exercise of Divine mercy consistent with the claims of justice; the doctrine of justification by faith, so far from destroying or diminishing the rights and authority of the law, actually ratifies and confirms them. So long as every precept of the law finds a place within the dispensation of the gospel, and our present obedience corresponds with that which was originally imposed; the gospel cannot be charged with lowering the standard of morality, nor narrowing the range and bounds of our duties and obligations. And so long as it continues to tell us that the impenitent and hardened lie exposed to the wrath of the Most High, and to assure us that the distinctions and honours of heaven shall be proportioned to the progress that we make in holiness, and the diligence and zeal that we employ in the cause of God and of goodness, it cannot be accused of detracting from the use and excellence of good works, nor of enfeebling any of the animating, and powerful motives, and encouragements to a life of the most pure piety, and of the most sublime and active beneficence and virtue.

Within the limits of Christian duty, however

much it may have been suspected of having contracted and abridged them, it leaves ample room for the most ardent admirer of morality, to put forth every faculty and every portion of his strength, in the most strenuous and unremitting efforts for the glory of God, and the good of man. So far from laying any restraints on his moral powers, or repressing any of his laudable and generous enterprises, it only contributes to confirm and invigorate his resolution, and impart a superior decision and energy to all his benevolent and holy exertions. Without departing from the simplicity or purity of the faith ; without encroaching upon the honour of the Redeemer's righteousness, or incurring the smallest danger of fostering a spirit of legality and self-dependence, with the most evangelical creed in his head, and a soul the most thoroughly imbued with its principles, a Christian may exercise every branch of virtue, and rise to the highest elevation in moral goodness ; he may devote himself unto godliness and good works ; he may spend and be spent in deeds of beneficence, and in labours of love ; in his heart he may cherish an attachment as affectionate and intense, as the spirits of the just made perfect, to all that is amiable and excellent, and throw around his life as beauteous and brilliant an array of graces and of virtues, as ever distinguished or adorned an angel ; and so far from checking the ardour of his benevolence, or discouraging the steadiness and

vigour of his endeavours, the gospel sanctions and approves them all, and stimulates him to still more enlarged and arduous undertakings ; by reminding him of the immense, the infinite obligations which he owes his Redeemer ; by holding up to his imitation the bright and perfect pattern exhibited by the Son of God ; and unfolding to his view the bliss and the glory of heaven, to reward and crown his labours.

On taking a review, therefore, of all that has been stated in this chapter, we find that, so far from encouraging a spirit of sloth or licentiousness, of all the religious and moral schemes that ever were proposed to the belief or observance of man, the gospel, as delivered by Christ and his apostles, is by far the most elevated in the principles which it inspires, and the most pure and spiritual in the duties which it enjoins. Never was there a system published within the confines of the globe, so strongly calculated to disturb the moral apathy of a darkened and degenerate world, to set every principle in man a stirring for his personal improvement, and compel him to embark all the energies of his soul, in efforts to advance the honour of God and the general welfare of humanity. It every where breathes such an air of purity and sanctity, and is so plenteously stored with means and motives to enforce the practice of every duty, that we cannot place a foot within its limits without feeling that we are treading upon holy ground, and

that it is at our peril that we dare to pollute or profane a region so blessed and hallowed by the symbols of a present Deity. Wherever it comes home to a man in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power, it sanctifies him, and makes him a son of God: and such is the holy virtue which it possesses, that it never establishes its residence in a land without spreading the mild and balmy influence of its heavenly temper, over thousands who are strangers to its saving power; and thus gives a polish and a grace to their deportment, which, though they do not prevent their final perdition, at any rate, strip their conduct of much of its perniciousness and filth, like the perfumed applications in gangrene, which, if they cannot arrest its ravages, and prevent its fatal termination, at least render its progress and close less odious and disgusting.

Men of infidel minds may declaim as they please about the inconsistency betwixt salvation by grace, and the practice of moral duties; professors of a sickly and hectic orthodoxy may edify us with their harangues, upon the legal tendency and hurtful consequences of admonitions to the cultivation of vital godliness, and the performance of good works: on these subjects, however, Christ and his apostles never felt themselves confined nor encumbered with difficulties, nor the strong and steady march of their practical addresses embarrassed by any of those alarming apprehensions, which some of their more cautious and discerning

followers affect so terribly to dread. These preachers of a free salvation, who have so widely filled the world with the doctrines of grace, are the very preachers who have most zealously and successfully contended for unreserved devotedness to God, and the most strenuous and persevering discharge of every moral obligation.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, and redeem the world by his death, did not hesitate to declare that, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, and to assure us that, in the great day of retribution, the careless and the hardened, who were too indolent to study his will, and too wicked to perform it, shall be driven from his presence with every mark of detestation and disgrace, and banished into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And his apostles, who were commissioned to publish this gospel in all the fulness of its grace and truth among the nations, and bring all men to the obedience of the faith, with the very same distinctness with which they tell us that we have redemption through his blood, maintain that to be carnally minded is death, and that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

When, therefore, we find the very same Bible which proclaims a free salvation through faith, in the righteousness of the Redeemer, just as boldly and distinctly asserting the necessity of having the

law of God written on the heart; when we find the very same Bible which affirms that, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified, just as frequently and as fully insisting on the necessity of being born again; when we find the very same Bible which announces the invaluable fact, that by grace we are saved, just as broadly and forcibly assuring us that, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord: with what safety or consistency can we admit its statements in the one case, and reject them in the other? What reason can we assign for relying on its declarations when it asserts the efficacy of faith, and yet discredit or disregard its attestations, when it speaks of the necessity of holiness? If the Bible be our standard, we must receive its testimony in all its latitude; and never conclude that our belief, or our practice, is either sound or warranted, till it corresponds with the principles of revelation in all their dimensions, and carries us on to an unqualified compliance with its dictates, in the whole of their length and breadth.

If, in the revelation which he had sent us, Jehovah had confined his communications to the announcement of a solitary truth; if, for example, he had merely told us of the power and virtue of the blood of propitiation, or of the all-sufficiency of the atonement, or of the liberal and universal offers of its blessings, without saying a single syllable, respecting the blood of sprinkling or the sanc-

tifying influences of the Spirit, or of the preparation necessary for the enjoyment of celestial bliss: however scanty and defective the information which such a message would have conveyed, it would have become us to have accepted it with gratitude, and with cordial acquiescence to have bowed to its decision. But, when the Bible has gone farther; when it has not only told us of the grace that brings salvation, but likewise of the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; when it as frequently and earnestly dwells upon the necessity of conformity to the image of Jesus and obedience to his will, as upon submission to his righteousness and reliance on his sacrifice: with what face can any man call himself his disciple, and profess, in deference to the authority of the word of God, to found his hopes of acceptance upon the death of the Redeemer, whilst, in downright opposition to the clear and unequivocal injunctions of the very same Bible, he refuses to cultivate the holiness of heart and of life which it inculcates? If he who keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point, be guilty of all, because, by violating its precepts in one article, he proves that his obedience to it, in other instances, does not flow from unfeigned respect and love to its spirit and its principles, for, if his attachment to it had been sincere, this would have been manifested by an uniform and undeviating regard to all that it prescribes: after faith and holiness are so closely

and inseparably united in the system of revelation, the man who attempts to divide what God has so firmly and indissolubly conjoined, with all his pretended veneration for the oracles of truth and profound admiration of the grace of the gospel, that man evinces that he has no real respect for the Scriptures, that his religion is not the religion of the Bible, nor his faith the faith of the operation of God. By this preposterous attempt to exalt faith at the expense of its inseparable attendant, and to make a simple speculative inoperative belief in the truths of revelation to be the whole of religion, let him fancy what he may, this gives sad evidence that he has no faith at all, that he has no part in the great salvation, and that, so far from doing honour to the grace of the Redeemer, he is actually defeating the great design of his death, and guilty of crucifying him afresh.

CHAP. III.

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*The means by which the Gospel establishes  
the Law.*

FROM what has been already stated respecting the perpetuity of the law, and its continuance under the Christian dispensation, it is to be presumed, that it will now be readily acknowledged, notwithstanding all the outcry against the licentious tendency of the gospel, that, so far from having unsettled the foundations of moral obligation and contracted the bounds of human duty, it has actually ratified and established the authority of the law, and lent a large accession of strength and majesty to the interests of religion and of righteousness.

Since, however, it so explicitly excludes our good works from having any share in our justification, and so unequivocally and roundly maintains, that we are saved by grace through faith, it may be very naturally and justly asked, how it is possible that the gospel can not only repress the prevalence of impiety and vice, but even give increased stability and force to the sanctions of the law, and infuse into the obedience of believers, a steadiness

and consistency, an unction and an energy, far beyond all that ever has been displayed by any other class of the children of men? If the preceding reasoning possess any soundness at all, there can be no doubt of the reality of the fact: the only question which now remains to be discussed, is, the means by which this singular but delightful result is attained.

In the hope, therefore, of still farther unfolding the matchless excellence of this sacred system, of disarming its opponents of their unfounded suspicions and prepossessions, of raising it still higher in the esteem, and endearing it still more deeply to the affections of its sincere and intelligent admirers, we shall now endeavour to illustrate the manner in which it so effectually promotes the interests of holiness, and secures such profound and unqualified submission to the mandates of the eternal law.

The reader may be expected to agree with me, in believing that that system bids fairest for success, which is addressed to the greatest number of our mental and moral powers, and addressed to each with the most mighty and commanding force. If a given weight can move a body at a certain rate, every addition made to the moving power, must surely accelerate its velocity. If a vessel be regarded as secure with a single anchor, its safety undoubtedly must be augmented by another of double or treble strength. And if the gospel, as we have

seen, without detracting one ace from the extent or strictness of the law; if the gospel, at the very time that it retains all its precepts and requisitions in their original integrity and purity, is found to pour a new and unknown vigour into the motives which bind the soul of a Christian in the bands of delighted and devoted attachment to his duty; we naturally and necessarily must admit, that, so far from having unhinged the obligation, or diminished the claims of the law, it has unspeakably heightened and confirmed the whole.

Grant the legitimacy of this test of its efficacy; and the request for yielding this concession cannot be regarded as forming an unreasonable or extravagant demand on any man's judgment or liberality; and the gospel will bear an honourable, a fearless, and triumphant comparison with every scheme that has been employed to regulate or improve the morals of men. It is addressed to every faculty and power to which legal motives can be applied; and there is no argument nor consideration which its opponent can press into its service but what the gospel can also wield, not only with equal advantage, but with a decided and vast superiority over its competitor; and whilst thus, on the ground which they occupy in common, it is more than a match for its rival, it at the same time possesses innumerable and powerful resources of its own.

To justify the truth of these assertions, it must be observed, that, in order to secure a habitual and

cordial compliance with the dictates of morality, nothing can be more desirable nor useful than strong realizing convictions of the necessity of holiness, an unfeigned love and attachment to duty, and ability to fulfil with constancy and ease the services which the law of God enjoins.

Each of these qualities seems to be indispensably requisite to procure the undeviating obedience of men to the authority of their Creator. Man is an intelligent agent, and, therefore, if we would wish to obtain his submission to any measure or practice which we recommend, we must first apply ourselves to his understanding, and procure the assent or conviction of his mind to the reasonableness and propriety of what we enforce. He is an active being, endowed with various feelings and passions; and, therefore, if we would expect to gain his acquiescence in what we urge, we must point our admonitions to his heart, and engage his affections in its favour. And as he is a sinful, weak, and corrupt creature, in order to maintain the firm and predominating influence of holiness in his heart and life, and fit him for the acceptable and successful performance of the Divine will, he must be furnished with assistance to give effect to the moral motives by which he is addressed, and supplied with strength for uniformly and cheerfully walking in the commandments and ordinances of God.

If, without the concurrence of these different

circumstances, no genuine holiness can be produced, and if by their union they are perfectly sufficient to insure it; then we can be at no loss to account for the unrivalled efficacy of the gospel, and discover its infinite superiority over every other system; for, while in one or more of these respects each of them is deplorably deficient, the gospel most easily and amply secures them all. By the representation which it gives of the nature of the law, it most forcibly demonstrates the importance and necessity of obedience; by the dispositions which it inspires, it creates a love and attachment to holiness; and by the aid which it imparts, it effectually enables the believer to discharge the duties which the law of God inculcates.

In order to verify these remarks, we shall now endeavour to illustrate each of them in succession.

#### SECT I.

The Gospel establishes the Law, by demonstrating the importance and necessity of obedience.

#### PART I.

As man is a rational agent, and the understanding is one of the most valuable and powerful faculties in his nature, no system can expect success without addressing itself immediately and fully to his judgment. When once the conviction of this

faculty is gained, we may depend upon the consent of his other powers: but till once this object is accomplished, it is as vain to hope to make any impression upon his heart and affections, as if our harangues were directed to a plant or a stone.

Though truth does not always operate upon the understanding; though when it is overlooked and disregarded, when it is imperfectly comprehended, or loosely and carelessly held, it may produce no sensible result: whenever a tenet, whether true or false, makes its way directly and distinctly to the mind, and takes complete and firm possession of the intellect, its effect upon the temper and conduct is instantaneous and irresistible. In the hardihood of dogmatism, infidels have declaimed on the insignificance of forms of faith, and the all-sufficiency of an upright and virtuous life: but amidst all the vagaries of fancy, it was scarcely possible to have selected a more groundless assertion, and one which admits a more instant and palpable contradiction. Amongst Christians, Jews, Mahometans and Pagans all over the world, we find that their practice is uniformly regulated by the opinions which they adopt; that it is just as impossible to separate the man's conduct from his faith, as the form of the impression on the wax from the figure engraven on the seal; and, therefore, that no life can be permanently in the right while the creed is in the wrong.

From various causes a man's conduct may fall

below the notions which he holds: but they cannot naturally, nor in ordinary circumstances rise and remain above them. A man may sometimes give less for an article than what he knows to be its worth; but while it is a commodity with which the market is crowded, it is very unlikely that he will advance for it more than what he reckons its real value. And though, from the crookedness of the human mind, men may often act inconsistently with the principles which they profess, no reason can be conceived to induce them perpetually and uniformly to submit to the labour and self-denial of maintaining a more sublime and holy deportment, than what they actually believe to be in itself just and right, and absolutely necessary for their present and their future welfare.

The more error and delusion, therefore, that we can remove, on the subjects of religion and of morality, it is obvious that we shall bring the more points of a man's constitution in contact with his duty, and render him, if not more active and unwearied in its discharge, at least more wretched and restless for its neglect. In every other case, the value of truth is inexpressible, and the most lasting and beneficial consequences attend it. If we can prove to a man that twice two is neither more nor less than four, we have no suspicion that any future calculator will shake his confidence in this fact, and substitute a different belief. If we can convince him that poison is destructive of

animal life; we have no fear that any impostor will persuade him of the contrary, and prevail with him to have recourse to it as a safe and nourishing article of diet. And if truth be of such utility in the business of the world, it is of equal, or still greater importance in the affairs of religion and morality. The nearer the views of men can be brought to coincide with its dictates, the more closely will their convictions accord with their duty, and the more unremittingly and powerfully will they be prompted to perform what it prescribes. The men who have the most enlarged and correct ideas of the nature and obligation of the Divine law, may justly be expected to surpass their brethren in the fidelity and conscientiousness with which they will obey its dictates. If we enjoyed the same exact and comprehensive knowledge of its nature and excellence with an angel, might we not warrantably expect that our conduct would rise far above its present level? And might we not anticipate still more lovely and blessed results, if we saw the beauties of the moral law in the same strong and steady light with which the eye of God beholds them? If, therefore, we could succeed in planting in the mind of every man a distinct perception of the nature, and a deep and abiding conviction of the reasonableness and obligation, of all its enactments, might not we also look with confidence for the most delightful and surprising moral transformation to diffuse its sublime

and purifying influence through all the abodes of humanity?

If the soundness of these observations be admitted; in other words, if exalted ideas of the purity and spirituality of the law, and impressive and realizing convictions of our obligation to obey it, are fitted to promote the interests of holiness; then we must instantly and explicitly confess the transcendent moral efficacy of the gospel. Never was any class of principles more directly and powerfully calculated to inspire a dread and horror of transgression, and enforce an unreserved and cheerful dedication to the service of the Most High, than those doctrines on which the gospel is founded, which pervade every branch of the system, and which it presses with the greatest warmth and cogency on the understanding, the heart and conscience of every Christian. Without travelling into the whole extent of evangelical truth, we may just ask, by what means could a more firm and unshaken regard to the cause of religion and of righteousness be secured, than by a demonstration of the equity and reasonableness of the demands of the law, the exceeding sinfulness and awful danger of sin, and the strictness and inflexibility of Divine justice? Could more mighty and resistless considerations have been desired or conceived, to command the entire and unqualified obedience of every human creature? Yet, these are precisely the means which the gospel has em-

ployed, and employed too with a force and an energy which leave every rival and competitor at a breathless distance behind, to constrain them who believe in Jesus to cultivate good works.

It proves the obligation of the law, and the necessity of obeying it:

### I. By shewing us the equity and reasonableness of all its demands.

These are matters, of which, there can be no doubt, that it is exceedingly desirable that all men should be fully and thoroughly convinced. It is contrary to every principle of reason to expect that any man will comply with the prescriptions of the law, before he be sensible that obedience is his duty. When once he is satisfied of the justice and excellence of what the law exacts, and of his accountableness to its authority, it may naturally be supposed that he will submit to its dictates, and readily fulfil its injunctions. But without a persuasion of the propriety and reasonableness of its demands, it is impossible to inspire him with any veneration for its rights, or create in him any sincere and permanent delight in its precepts; and without such a veneration and delight, our obedience must be very stiff and artificial, very cramped, limited, and desultory.

But if a discovery of the excellence of the law be of any service at all in producing genuine and lasting attachment to its precepts, it certainly fol-

lows, that the more enlarged and distinct the conceptions are which we entertain of its spirituality and perfection, the more constant, unqualified, and vigorous will our obedience prove.

Now, it is exactly the gospel which affords us the most impressive and overpowering evidence of the equity and reasonableness of all that the law contains.

Under the idea of magnifying and confirming the law, every other system in reality weakens and degrades it; and so far from advancing, actually undermines and destroys the interests of holiness. For let the intentions of their abettors be ever so pure and honourable, on what other principle is every opinion founded, which asserts or insinuates that man must be justified, either in whole or in part, by his personal performances, but upon the assumption that the law is not perfect, that it does not require absolute and undeviating compliance with its precepts; but that, fallen, degraded, and depraved as the creature is, it accommodates itself to his frailty and his crimes, and will placidly accept his sincere, though defective and vitiated services, in the room of steady uniform and unqualified obedience.

Now, to the votaries themselves of such tenets, we surely may with safety appeal, and ask, whether notions like these can ever be expected to exalt our conceptions of the spirituality and perfection of the law, and inspire any uncommon dread

and horror of transgression? We would ask them, if the clear and unquestionable consequence, the natural and necessary result of such opinions must not be, to lower the standard of morality, to break down the fence that encircles the sacred enclosures of duty, and embolden men to rush upon temptation, and tamely yield to the suggestions of indolence and corruption? Such a belief must inevitably lead those who adopt it to imagine, that God, in some measure, is like themselves, that he will not mark their offences with strictness, nor punish their delinquencies with severity? And, in a world like this, where men are all naturally alienated from the love and the life of God, and devoted to objects and pursuits of their own, is it credible that the prevalence of such a licentious persuasion as this, will ever excite any peculiar dread of that abominable and forbidden thing which Jehovah hates, beget any ardent concern for their individual improvement, or inspire any lively and ardent zeal for the promotion of the cause of godliness and virtue in the world at large?

But now look at the gospel, and say, if any such immoral and pernicious conclusions can be drawn from the momentous and awful facts which it discloses? Go to Gethsemane and Calvary, and say, if the genuine and enlightened disciples of the Saviour, can ever learn to cherish slight and diminutive thoughts of the sublimity and grandeur, the spirituality and purity of the law, or of

the immaculate, the infinite holiness of its Divine and adorable Author, from the astonishing and melting spectacle there exhibited to their view? Let them contemplate the Son of God and the Lord of glory, who has the universe at his command, and all the resources of the Deity at his disposal, for the maintenance of the honour of this law, and the establishment of its just and reasonable authority, bending beneath a load of woe, and by the weight of his internal sufferings thrown prostrate upon the cold ground; let them view his sacred body bathed in a bloody sweat, and his soul, perplexed and oppressed by the fulness of its sorrows, in earnest fervent intercession addressing the throne of mercy; let them take a survey of his frame mangled with the scourge and racked upon the cross; let them look on his eyes, that ever beamed with benignity, and diffused around the radiance of kindness and peace, now swimming in darkness and sinking in death: and say, if creation can afford, or Omnipotence can supply a demonstration, half so affecting and impressive as this, of the eternal righteousness which is in every statute, and the unchangeable excellence, and the absolute inviolability of the whole?

If, within the sphere of human knowledge, there be one fact, whose truth is carried farther than another beyond the limits of doubt and uncertainty, it is the demonstration afforded by the death of the Redeemer, that the law is holy, and the

commandment holy, and just, and good, and that heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. For if the Lord Jehovah in a single article could have receded from its enactments; if, in the least instance, he could have admitted the smallest abatement of its demands; if, in consistency with the high objects of his government, and the safety and glory of his throne, he could have dispensed with undeviating conformity to its decrees, and have sustained the personal, though defective and polluted performances of the sinner, as a complete and adequate satisfaction to its requisitions: when, by his almighty power he could so soon, and so easily have annihilated the law, or reduced it to the level of our tastes and humours, we may rest assured that such a measure would have been adopted; that he never would have laid all the treasures of love and mercy under contribution, nor have exhausted all the riches of his generosity and grace to illustrate its excellence, and give dignity, force, and permanence to its demands: the painful and expensive plan of redemption would have been spared; the world never would have been astonished with the incarnation of its Creator; the echoes of Gethsemane never would have been disturbed by the midnight cries of the suffering Saviour, nor the rugged summit of Calvary moistened and reddened with the blood of the Son of God.

The sufferings and the death, therefore, of the Redeemer are a proof wide as the dominions of the Deity and lasting as eternity, that every form and shade of unrighteousness is sin, and that it is at the certain, the awful peril of every human soul to presume to commit it.

Now, if a conviction of the obligation of the law be of the smallest efficacy in leading us to obey it; and, if thus it is found, that the gospel furnishes us with the most lively and affecting discovery of the justice, the reasonableness and inviolability of its precepts, is it consistent with the principles of probability to believe that the Christian, who is taught by the very nature of his faith, to entertain the most profound and realizing ideas of its sacred and august authority, will be the very first or most frequent to infringe its venerable and righteous injunctions?

It is true, indeed, that he places no dependence upon his own merits, that he builds his hopes of heaven solely upon the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: but is there any thing in this exercise of his mind, from which it may be apprehended, either as a necessary, or even as a probable consequence, that, by thus renouncing his reliance on his own virtuous deeds, and betaking himself simply and wholly to the protection of grace, he will lose his convictions of the binding nature of the law, and of his accountableness to the Judge of all? If in the world there be one man in whom

the sense of personal responsibility is more strong and habitual, who has a more nice and instinctive perception of what is base and criminal, or a more full and abiding impression of the rights and claims of the eternal law than another, it clearly and unquestionably is the Christian. For what is it which first creates in him a suspicion of the sufficiency of his own righteousness, and compels him earnestly and entirely to have recourse to the salvation of the gospel? When the great mass of men around him give themselves no concern about matters of a spiritual nature, and which lie at the very foundation of all human happiness and hope; when, in downright defiance of the most plain and the most repeated déclarations of revelation, they coolly commit their eternity to some vague and inexplicable notions which they have formed of Divine mercy, or to the ability of their own paltry and contemptible performances to meet the large and the high demands of the law of Heaven; and with the immense weight of their endless condition, suspended wholly, or in part, upon their own virtues, have scarcely the semblance of a virtue to shew: why does he hesitate to submit to their choice, and decline to club his fate with theirs? Why does he deviate so widely from the course of the multitude, and refuse to embark his own best interests on board that frail and crazy bottom on which they have boldly ventured their everlasting all?

What reason can we assign for this strange and odious departure from common usage, but a superior solicitude about the business of religion, a more adequate and intense concern for the affairs of immortality? But without a fuller discovery of the equity and purity of the law, and a more clear and penetrating discernment of the criminality and danger of transgression, how could this more earnest and vehement anxiety for salvation have been excited? The eagerness with which a man desires deliverance, must always be proportioned to the apprehensions which he forms of the magnitude of the evil which he dreads. And the sense too, which the sinner entertains of the misery of his natural state, must undoubtedly correspond to the views which he possesses of the spirituality and purity, of the obligation and perfection of that law which he has broken, and by whose sentence his condition must be for ever decided. It is on the highest authority that we are informed that "where there is no law, there is no transgression." By analogy, therefore, we are warranted to affirm, that the man who has slight and defective ideas of the obligation and rectitude of the law, must have equally faint and inappropriate impressions of the extent, and sinfulness, and danger attending his offences.

The man who is conscious of no crime, can feel no more fear of the Divine displeasure than Adam in innocence, or than an angel in heaven. Such a man can never cherish the least esteem for the righ-

teousness of the Mediator, nor repair to it as the only refuge and rest of his soul. If, by mistake or accident, a pardon were put into the hands of a man who never had committed any crime against the statutes of his country, and who, therefore, had no occasion for such a document, instead of being delighted by its appearance, he would rather feel insulted at the sight, and if pressed to accept it, would be disposed to resent such an admonition as an indignity. But would it meet with such a surly reception from the man for whom it is intended; who is sensible of his need of it; and who knows that without it he must soon undergo the ignominious and untimely death which he dreads? No: he would hail its arrival with ecstasy, and clasp it to his breast with transports of gratitude and joy. And, in exact proportion to the convictions which a man entertains of his sinfulness, will be the esteem with which he will prize, and the ardour with which he will embrace the salvation which the gospel proclaims. So long as he fancies himself chargeable with no more guilt than he can completely expiate, and assailed by no greater danger than what he can easily surmount, to him the preaching of the cross must be foolishness, and the knowledge of Christ and of him crucified the most useless and insignificant subject of information. In such a case he can contract no love nor admiration for the Holy One of God, nor possess any overcoming and abiding desires of an interest in the unsearchable, the

inexhaustible riches of his grace. But let him once obtain a thorough discovery of the evil and malignity of sin ; let the Holy Ghost once set home the commandment upon his conscience in its purity and power ; let him once perceive the extent, the spirituality and excellence of the law, and the sovereign, matchless wisdom and goodness condensed into each of its precepts ; let him once see the emptiness, the worthlessness of his own performances, and find that all his own righteousnesses are as filthy rags : let him thus feel the utter rottenness of the foundation beneath him, and discover the dreadful ruin which threatens to overwhelm the whole of his everlasting prospects ; and gladly would he now give, were it at his disposal, the wealth of ten thousand worlds for an interest in that grace which reigns through righteousness, and which is provided by the God of mercy solely for the benefit of the destitute and undone. The atonement is now all his salvation and all his desire ; and he counts every thing but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

Now, is it credible, is it possible, that that man who by a sense of his guilt and danger, arising from a superior discovery of the purity and obligation of the Divine law, has been hunted out of all his refuges of lies ; driven from all his groundless and vain-glorious pleas ; compelled to abandon the territories of self-righteousness, to bend his flight to Calvary ; and, in all the urgency of fear, alarm and

terror, to betake himself completely to the protection of the cross, will lose his horror of iniquity, and his desire of cordial unqualified conformity to the dictates of this law, whenever he has reached the citidal of mercy and obtained an asylum for his precious but agitated, distracted and perishing soul? Is that man who, from dread of an approaching storm, has fled to the shelter of a building, most likely to be the very first to venture forth amidst its violene, and expose himself to the utmost of its rage? Is that man who from the fear of an invading foe, has retired to the defence of a fortress, likely to be the very first to break away from the security he has found, to throw himself in the enemy's line of march, and become the helpless victim of his insolence and cruelty? Is the man who, by pestilence, has been forced to resort to a healthier region, before its ravages are spent, likely to be the first to quit his safe retreat, and plunge into the midst of contagion and death? Is the man who has the most deep and painful impressions of the infamy and odiousness of intemperance, just the man who runs the greatest risk of becoming the slave of dissipation and debauchery? Is the man who is most feelingly alive to the disadvantages and disgrace accompanying titled ignorance, and who has subjected himself to the greatest expense and toil in travelling in quest of knowledge, just the most likely person, when he has reached the seat of the most liberal and extensive learning, to neglect

every opportunity which its munificent institutions afford him for successfully cultivating the study of the arts and sciences, and sink down into all the apathy of the most callous and impenetrable listlessness and idleness? And with the most penetrating convictions of the dignity and excellence of the law, with the most distressing ideas of the turpitude and baseness of transgression, with the deepest dissatisfaction with his former course of carelessness, and the most bitter self-reproaches for his former offences, with the most distracting solicitude to secure deliverance from his trespasses, and reconciliation with the God whom by his iniquities he had dis-honoured or provoked; is it credible, is it possible, that the believer, after all the pains which he has taken to obtain freedom from sin, and restoration to the friendship of his Creator, will be the most forward to tamper with temptation, and the most easy and frequent in consenting to the foul suggestions of depravity and wickedness; that he will retain the least value for the favour of the Almighty, and manifest the least concern for the cultivation of that holiness, the want of which has wrought him so much mischief, and the absence of which he has had such cause to regret and deplore? Whilst in every other department of the natural and moral world, every fresh accession of strength to a cause augments its force; are we to suppose that the case before us constitutes a solitary exception to this universal rule, and that, though the Christian pre-

serves all the respect and reverence for the law, which the self-righteous are taught on the principles of legality, or natural religion to cherish, and to these adds all the regard and veneration which the gospel inspires, his attachment to its dictates, and his devotion to its duties, will prove more loose and feeble, than those of the men who are actuated by the influence of the weak and shifting motives of self-righteousness, and of self-righteousness alone?

Every consideration, however, derived from this topic, in support of the obligation of the law, and the necessity of obeying it, is most powerfully corroborated,

II. By the impressive view which the gospel gives us of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the dreadful danger by which it is attended.

Deep and realizing convictions of the equity and immutability of the Divine law, are uncontestedly of great importance to secure pure and permanent submission to its authority. For, if any thing can penetrate our understandings, and lay a firm and lasting hold upon the intellectual part of our constitution, it undoubtedly is an appeal to our judgement upon the extent and reasonableness of the claims of the law, and a luminous and forcible demonstration of our subjection to its authority, and responsibility to its tribunal.

Every practical effect, however, expected from

such an appeal, is most powerfully confirmed by every fact which tends to illustrate the criminal nature and the dreadful consequences of transgression. If arguments upon the obligation of the law are fitted to enlighten our reason, upon the necessity of personal holiness, addresses upon the guilt, and the punishment of iniquity, are calculated to rouse our fears, and lead us to hate and shun what we find to be both detestable and ruinous.

This evidently is a matter of no small moment. The man who has the most keen and instinctive sense of the evil and the danger of any improper course, is certainly the most likely to avoid that measure which he regards with the greatest aversion and dread. If we would wish to restrain our servant, or our son, from fraud, lying, or covetousness, could we contrive or seek a more simple and successful expedient, than to inspire him with a just and lively idea of their disgraceful nature, and of the terrible and irretrievable misery in which the indulgence of them will inevitably involve him? And is it possible to devise or desire a more complete and effectual antidote, to the fascinating and destructive snares of vice, than a clear and impressive view of its unparalleled odiousness, and of the tremendous, the unutterable wretchedness which it entails?

But if an apprehension of its evils has any tendency at all to deter us from the love and practice of what is forbidden, it is a fact which needs no

proof, that the more enlarged and adequate notions we entertain of its malignity, the more carefully will we guard against its presence, and the more sedulously will we labour to escape from its fatal and horrid power.

If the truth of this position be admitted, then we will soon see another reason for asserting the lovely and matchless moral energy of the evangelical system; for, while sin is the most abominable and dreadful evil in the universe, it is the gospel which affords us the most exact and faithful portrait of its loathsome deformity, and conveys the most formidable and revolting representation of its inexpressible and never ending horrors.

The dispensations of providence, indeed, furnish us with many striking and awful proofs of the criminality and enormity of transgression. The ravages of famine, the desolations of pestilence, the wholesale waste and havoc of war; the turbulence and anarchy in public life, and the fretfulness, irritation and discord, which lower over private habitations, and darken and trouble the domestic circle; the savage satisfaction and cold-blooded cruelty with which the mercenary and covetous batten on the hapless victims of their rapacity and violence; the wrecks of the most expensive schemes, and the frustrations of the dearest hopes; the poverty, disgrace and suffering, which tread so closely on the heels of vice, and the scenes of lamentation and sorrow every where created by the ceaseless

operations of death, all most loudly proclaim that it is an evil, and a bitter thing, to depart from the Most High, and that sin is alike the foe of God, and the plague and scourge of man.

But, calamitous and painful as they are, can any one of these events, or even the whole of them, when taken together, convey an idea half so deep and affecting of the turpitude and baseness, of the guilt and atrocity of this root of all bitterness, as the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ? Let the sinner only reflect on the Divine dignity, the infinite perfections, the uncreated and eternal excellencies of Him, who, in agony and blood, was suspended there: let him remember that the illustrious and adorable sufferer was no less than the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, He, whom all the angels revere, and all nature obeys: let him think of all this, and then say what must be the amount of the evil and malignity of sin, which, before mercy could be extended to the criminal, stretched the Holy One of God upon the accursed tree, and brought the Prince of life to the darkness and dust of death?

Can the mind conceive, or could Omnipotence, with all its vast and inexhaustible resources, have employed a mean of manifesting in a manner, by the ten thousandth part, so tremendous and moving, the unutterable, the infinite enormity of transgression, as the sufferings and death of the almighty and ever-blessed Immanuel? Could a pro-

clamation from the throne of the Eternal, announcing his detestation of this foul and loathsome principle of mischief and of misery, and his fixed determination, in every instance, to punish it with terrible and unsparing rigour; could the expulsion of the angels, that fell, from the regions of light, and the banishment of the first apostate human pair, from the seat of innocence and bliss; could the destruction of the old world by water, the overthrow of the cities of the plain, the subversion of the whole frame of nature for the base and impious revolt of man, or the everlasting anguish and wailings of the place of despair, have left on the mind of the criminal, or have spread over the empire of Jehovah an impression half so deep, and indelible of the evil and danger of iniquity, as that which is produced by the sufferings and death of the Son of God and the Lord of glory?

The annihilation of the material universe, with all its enormous load of worlds, the never ending wretchedness and ruin of all the guilty inhabitants which it contains, sad and disastrous as such catastrophes may appear, shrink into insignificance, and are less than nothing, when compared with the incarnation, the sufferings, and dying agonies of Immanuel. They are only creatures, but he is the ever-blessed and all-glorious Creator; mighty and immense as they seem, their dimensions are limited, and their magnitude and value can easily be told by Him, who, by his intelligence planned, by his

power produced, and by his unremitting energy, pervades, sustains, and regulates the whole. But, what bounds can we assign to his majesty and grandeur, or what mind can comprehend the perfections and the glories of Him, who speaks and it is done; who commands, and all things stand fast; who formed creation by a word, and were it this day dissolved, could in a moment, and with ease, replace it; who is able to do again what he has already done, and to outdo all that he has yet performed; for he is not only mighty, but allmighty, not only sufficient, but all-sufficient; and all that he has hitherto accomplished, so far from being the measure of his might, is but a mere specimen of his power, and, when compared with the real amount of his wisdom and his strength, is no more than a drop to the ocean, or a grain to the globe.

It is in his death, accordingly, and there only, where we see, in its full extent and in all its matchless horrors, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. It is here where Jehovah, by the magnitude of the ransom, has published over all worlds, and perpetuated to eternity the immensity of our guilt, and the total inability of man and every other creature to expiate the demerit of a single trespass, or repair the mischief and dishonour which the least transgression has brought upon the authority and government of God. It is hither, accordingly, that the best and the highest in creation.

will come to study the holiness of his character, and learn the infinite evil and malignity of sin. When they wish to discover the justice of their Maker, and impress their own minds with the rectitude and inviolability of his law, passing by the place of perdition, and the scenes of the most awful devastation which wickedness has created in the other provinces of his dominions, they will turn their thoughts to the affecting spot which the sufferings of the Saviour have for ever ennobled and hallowed, and fix a devout and admiring eye on Him who bore the cross.

Now, if nothing less than the sufferings and sacrifice of a person of the Divine dignity, and of the uncreated matchless and eternal excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ, could expiate the guilt of our transgressions, and redeem us from the awful consequences of our crimes, how great must be the sinfulness of sin, and what a fearful thing must it be to fall into the hands of the living God !

The ignominy and torture sustained by our blessed and adorable Surety, go infinitely farther than merely to manifest the danger attending the commission of iniquity, and evince the equity and immutability of the law. They establish its supreme and incomprehensible excellence, and demonstrate the unalterable, the inconceivable criminality and atrocity of sin. For the Lord Jehovah is not farther exalted above his creatures in majesty and in power, than in wisdom and in goodness. Im-

measurably superior to the spirit of rash and wrong headed mortals, who frequently act from whim and caprice, or a wish to inspire a terror for the obstinacy and perseverance of their character, Jehovah does nothing to confound his subjects by an useless display of his might, and astonish them by the singularity and firmness of his measures. The King's strength loveth judgment, and therefore whatever he does, is done because it is just and right, and good, and because the contrary would be inconsistent with the glorious perfections of his nature, and repugnant to those principles of pure, unchanging and eternal rectitude, which direct and animate every movement of his almighty will, and regulate every step in the vast and complicated administration of the worlds which he has made. God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. He is love, and no taint of weakness can ever cloud the bright and immaculate purity of his character. In all his attributes and works he is perfect; and we never can entertain any just or worthy ideas whatever of his nature, till we regard him as the essence and consummation of every amiable uncreated and eternal excellence.

But if such be the sublime, the righteous and beneficent character of the Most High; then from the consideration of the perfections of his own infinite nature we may rest assured that there is not a single sentence nor syllable within the whole compass of the sacred code which he has prescribed, but

what is enacted upon account of its own intrinsic worth, and its tendency to display his own peerless glory, and secure the most extensive and lasting welfare of the universe. If, however, in this manner we are warranted to infer the ineffable holiness of the law, and the unreasonableness, the flagitiousness, and malignity of sin, what an overwhelming emphasis is given to this conclusion by the cross of Christ! By the stupendous method to which the God of mercy has there had recourse, to vindicate the claims of justice, and maintain the untarnished honour and lustre of his law, he has shown his deep detestation of iniquity, and left an everlasting memorial of the unutterable, the infinite criminality which every transgression contains. The sufferings and death of the Redeemer lay open the deformity of sin in all its hideousness, and in all its horrors, and enable us to see into the very heart and substance of this base, pestilential, and abominable principle. They prove that it is as detestable as it is dangerous; that it entails as much disgrace on the character, as wretchedness on the soul; that it sinks us as low in the scale of creation, that it separates us as completely from all that is noble, or lovely, or good, and allies us as closely to all that is mean, and vile, and despicable, as that it deprives us of happiness, and oppresses us with misery, vexation, and anguish. The sufferings and death of the Redeemer intimate how strongly it is reprobated by the Most High, and in what abhorrence it ought

to be held by all his intelligent offspring. For unless it had deserved it, is it credible, that the ever-blessed Jehovah would have hated it with such perfect and implacable hatred; that he would have threatened it with everlasting punishment; that he would have visited it with such awful tokens of his displeasure; and on its account have doomed his own Son to such unparalleled abasement and agony?

Is it possible then, for a Christian, for a man who believes in the absolute perfection of the Almighty, and in the Divinity of the Saviour, to take a survey of the qualities of iniquity in the light of the cross, without perceiving that sin is exceeding sinful, and that terrible as the judgments are with which it is menaced, there is no punishment which can surpass the amount of its demerits? Can he stand by the cross and contemplate the dying agonies of the Mighty sufferer, without cordially subscribing to the equity of that sentence which consigned himself, as a sinner, to dreadful and never-ending misery, and frankly acknowledging, that there is no place in the world of woe more dismal and intolerable than his guilt most righteously deserves? If one possessed of the majesty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, died for all, then all must have been morally dead, and utterly destitute of every thing that is valuable and good. For unless this was the case; unless our personal performances were totally insignificant and worthless; unless we were altogether incapable of working out a

righteousness by which we might be saved; unless our sins were possessed of an atrocity for which the whole creation was unable to atone, would the Father of mercies and the God of love have surrendered to ignominy so mean, and sufferings so severe, a person possessed of the infinite excellencies, and of the close and tender relation to himself, as our almighty and adorable Redeemer?

From his death in our room, the believer is taught to conclude, that by nature all are dead in trespasses and sins; and whilst he contemplates the compassion of Jehovah in surrendering up his own Son to deliver us from the death which we deserved, shame and contrition for the iniquities which he has wrought, for his offences against the God of glory, and his total want of all resemblance to his perfect and lovely character, humble and afflict him, and make him, in the bitterness of his spirit, abhor himself, and repent in dust and in ashes.

But if the dignity of the Redeemer give the believer an idea of the enormity of his guilt, the nature and intensity of the agonies which Immanuel sustained display the magnitude of the punishment which our offences merit. When the God of wisdom does nothing in vain; when in all his works and dispensations he uniformly keeps an object in view proportioned to the expense and grandeur of the means which he employs, is it possible for language to express, or the mind to conceive the dreadful

amount of those sorrows which abide the impenitent in the world of woe, from which nothing less than the sufferings and death of the Son of God could redeem us, and which, in the act of redemption, subjected him to such awful and unparalleled anguish? If the Lord Jesus Christ, by whose strength the mountains are dissolved, and who removeth the earth in his anger: if he, who upholds the worlds by the word of his power, and marshals the hosts of heaven; if he, who has the riches of creation at command, and who wields at pleasure the elements of nature; if he, when burdened with the load of human guilt, bent beneath its weight, and was thrown into an agony of sorrow; if, in the mysterious hour of his passion, his soul was troubled, and in the extremity of his marvellous distress, he was forced to present his singular supplication with strong crying, and with tears: who can conceive the sufferings which the sinner, in his own person must sustain, when wrath comes down upon him, to the utmost; when Divine indignation breaks on him in all its violence; and when, through a desolate and dreary eternity, he is left alone to contend with its unmeasured and unabating fury? Look at the travail of Immanuel and say, if it be not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God? Look at the pangs which he endured, and say, who can tell the power of the Almighty's anger?

Now, if a discovery of the sinfulness of sin, and of the punishment to which it is exposed, have any tendency whatever to inspire a hatred of its

presence, and deter us from loving or pursuing it, can it require any argument to prove, that the more cordially and thoroughly that we detest it, and the more deep and awful ideas we entertain of the terrible and intolerable misery with which it will be followed in the world to come, the more effectually will we be restrained from submitting to its dictates, and the more carefully will we cultivate, and the more diligently and zealously will we practise every branch of duty? And if our hatred of sin and attachment to holiness depend upon the ideas which we possess of the guilt and the danger of iniquity, does it need uncommon penetration to decide, whether the gospel, which teaches us that no Redeemer less than Divine could atone for the criminality of a single offence, and restore the offender to the forfeited favour of God, or that system which asserts or insinuates, as every schemes does, in a greater or less degree, which is opposed to the gospel, that the sinner by the punctuality and purity of his present, or future obedience, may compensate for the defects and worthlessness of the past, is best calculated to raise our conceptions of the spirituality and purity of the law, and excite the greatest fear and abhorrence of iniquity? To the candour and honesty of all, then, we cheerfully put the question, Whether that man, who imagines that his personal performances, either in the form of virtuous deeds or of penitential exercises, will in some degree counterbalance his demerits, and establish

a right to the possession of everlasting bliss; or that man who perceives such an emptiness, insignificance, and defilement in his best services, that he dare not confide in a single action that he has done, but is compelled to betake himself simply and entirely to the righteousness of Immanuel, can have the most elevated notions of the strictness of the law, and the sinfulness of sin, and be most likely in future to abstain from all appearance of evil? If distress and pain for past transgression can furnish any security for future care to avoid it, that pledge certainly is given by the man who, from a discovery of the total and absolute ruin in which sin had involved him, has been compelled to embrace the redemption of the cross as the unspeakable gift of God, and make it his all in all. But what gage can that man afford us of the punctuality and diligence of his future obedience to the law, when by his principles he is led to believe that there is nothing so very flagrant in his offences, but what, in some degree, he can with ease and success counteract by his own exertions?

The gospel shews the obligation of the law, and the necessity of obeying it,

III. By the clear and forcible demonstration which it furnishes of the inflexibility of Divine justice, and the certainty that God will inflict

every penalty which he has denounced against transgression.

These facts are of no small importance for securing respect to the precepts which he has enacted. The obedience paid to the laws of any country, is always in exact proportion to the opinion which the inhabitants entertain of the firmness and impartiality of the government under which they are placed. If the belief once become general that the administration is lax and supple; sometimes correcting, and at other times overlooking transgressors; at one time pardoning, and at another punishing precisely the same offences; nor caring to maintain its own dignity and consistency, nor to carry, with decision and vigour, its own edicts into effect: though the laws should be written in blood, and death in its most hideous form should be menaced as the award of every trespass, when once it is ascertained that these appalling threatenings are empty bugbears, which seldom or never were intended to be fulfilled, the people will soon learn to despise their authority, and treat them with that habitual neglect which their inefficiency merits. But let all the subjects have a deep and strong persuasion that the legislature is in earnest, that no idle nor useless enactment cumbers the statute-book, that every requisition shall be infallibly enforced, and that in no quarter of the empire shall any of the provisions of the code be violated with impunity: let the pains

in such a case be ever so slight and gentle, when they are found with an unerring certainty to follow crime and overtake the criminal, the obedience of every class will prove unspeakably more steady and uniform, than if the most tremendous penalties had been denounced, but their execution left doubtful and precarious. Wherever there is a chance of escape men will not be wanting, sufficiently enterprizing and daring, for some bribe or other, to brave the utmost extremes of danger; but no consideration will urge them on to manifest and inevitable destruction. They will readily tamper with intoxicating liquors, and indulge in habits which have a slow and insensible, though fatal, influence upon their health; but nothing will persuade them to break their limbs, or to drain the contents of a poisoned bowl: they will encounter the perils of navigation, and face all the horrors of war; but nothing will induce them to submit to the bite of a rabid animal, nor plunge into the crater of a burning volcano.

Allow men to imagine that God will come and go in his demands; propagate the belief that his word is mutable and bending, at one time, yea, and at another, nay; circulate the persuasion that his declarations supply no index to his intentions, and that, notwithstanding the most terrific array of pains and penalties that bristle around the prescriptions of his law, he does not seriously mean to inflict them, that the great mass of trans-

gressors shall escape with impunity, and that any punishment that shall take place, will prove far lighter than they are apt to apprehend: and who, that is disposed to violate his commands, will ever be deterred from making the attempt? But let them see or practically believe, that, whilst the judgments threatened are the most dreadful that a creature can endure, their execution is also infallible; that crime and punishment are as inseparably united as the shadow and the substance; that the penalty as uniformly follows the transgression, as the effect follows the cause: and what man in his senses, by rushing upon what is forbidden, will throw himself upon the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler, and entail on himself certain, irretrievable, and intolerable ruin?

Now, of all the demonstrations, which ever were exhibited to the universe, of the inviolability of the law of the Most High, and his fixed determination to fulfil his word, the sufferings and death of his own eternal and all-glorious Son, are infinitely the most strong and overpowering. After this, who can believe that the King of heaven will recede a single inch from his threatenings, or in the smallest article alter or impair one sentence of all that his law contains? Has he not spared his own Son when placed in our room? On whom then can he now have pity or forbearance, who goes on frowardly in the way of his own heart, and obstinately holds fast any of his trespasses and

sins? Has vengeance to the utmost come down on the head of our innocent and almighty Surety? And is it possible that any sinner of the human race, who, by his follies and his vices, madly persists in waging war against the God of justice, shall escape the retributions of his righteous judgment? After visiting with such signal severity our imputed offences upon the person of the Mediator, will the dread Sovereign of the universe look with complacency and kindness upon the unhallowed and presumptuous transgressor, who, unawed by his terrors, and unmoved by his mercy, madly perseveres in insulting his majesty, and in defying the worst of his power? Can the sinner, polluted with the filth of his personal provocations, presume that he is possessed of greater loveliness or worth in the sight of Jehovah, than his own Son, in whom his soul delighted, who was free from every stain of guilt, and chargeable with nothing but the iniquities of those for whom, in the greatness of his mercy, he gave his almighty interposition? Can the feeble, the helpless rebel oppose a more powerful barrier to the stroke of justice, than the purity and strength of the Omnipotent Immanuel? Can he plead a nearer relation to the Most High, or the performance of more valuable and acceptable services, than He who was God's Fellow, and who, by the labours of his life, and the achievements of his death, spread a new radiance round the

throne of glory? And if the Lord Jesus Christ was not spared, when found in our room; on what principle then can any transgressor imagine that he may retain his sins, and yet secure eternal safety; may dishonour the God that made him, and yet enjoy the constant flow of his benignity and favour?

To the equity and candour of all then, we must once more appeal, and ask, whether the doctrine of justification through faith in the righteousness of Christ, or the doctrine of justification, either wholly or partially, by the performances of the sinner, gives the most full and impressive illustration of the inflexibility of Divine justice; and tends most effectually to evince the importance and necessity of personal piety and holiness?

Can that man possess any profound or elevated conceptions of the spirituality and perfection of the law, who, instead of believing that it requires exact and undeviating conformity to all its precepts, is led to suppose that it will be satisfied with his feeble, defective, and limited observances? Can he entertain any uncommon reverence for the veracity of God, and the truth and stability of his declarations, who is induced to fancy, as every self justiciary unavoidably must, that the God of heaven gives him a pattern of inconsistency and self-contradiction; that though in the Bible he enjoins us to love him with our whole heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; that

though he there tells us that all unrighteousness is sin, and that the wages of sin are death; that though he there affirms, that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, and that cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, still, notwithstanding these plain and explicit testimonies to the guilt and danger of a self-righteous spirit, it is by the deeds of this very law that he is to be justified; that if ever he be saved at all, it must, in part at least, be by works of righteousness which he has done; and that his lame and vitiated obedience, instead of exposing him to a curse, will bring down upon his head the best and richest blessings? What ideas must such a man frame of the holiness of the Great and Eternal King, who, instead of believing that evil cannot dwell with him, and that he cannot tolerate vice of any shape or name, is instructed to suppose that he is too merciful to be absolutely just and holy, that unless sin be uncommonly flagrant and revolting, it can excite no offence, nor be followed by any visitation of his displeasure; and that if his creatures display some temporary fits of obedience, and perform a few services of limited and local utility, he will close his eyes against their habitual failures, and kindly admit them to the everlasting enjoyment of his friendship?

And can such mean and unworthy notions of

God and of his law, ever exalt our thoughts of the importance of holiness, or inspire any peculiarly ardent and devoted attachment to duty?

Amidst all the zeal which the patrons of self-righteousness pretend for the cause of virtue, and the marvellous advantages which they boast that the general adoption of their tenets would achieve, few measures could prove more fatal to the interests of morality, than the universal prevalence of their principles. Expunge from the creed of a sinner the doctrine of salvation by grace, and leave him to believe that, by his own exertions, he may, either altogether, or in part, make his peace with God, and secure the distinctions of a glorious immortality, and what would be the consequences of such a notion? Would it beget an uncommon solicitude for his own eternal welfare? Would it create an unusual jealousy and dread of transgression? Would it bind his soul in grateful subjection to his Maker, and constrain him to yield himself unreservedly and for ever to a life of beneficence and piety? Would it form him to habits of singular watchfulness against evil, and to unwonted efforts in the service of religion and of righteousness, in order that with certainty he might make his everlasting happiness secure? There can be no doubt that all this ought to be the result of such a persuasion; and many, perhaps, may confidently expect that this precisely would be the effect which it would produce: but

the criminal always has found, and, as long as he carries a depraved and perverse heart within him, he always will find it far more convenient and agreeable to his depraved and wayward humours, to employ another, and a very different mode of reasoning, and to argue thus, “If the Deity be so very mild and placable as to re-admit me to his favour, upon the simple and easy terms of my own repentance and reformation, his justice surely cannot be so very strict, nor he himself so very stern and rigid, as to be incensed at every slight and temporary deviation from the straight line of duty. Since he already, on my penitence and amendment, has mercifully passed over my former demerits, he certainly will not be severe and inexorable in calling me to a reckoning for any of my future delinquencies. Since he fails to execute the terrible threatenings which he has published in his word, what great guilt can I contract, or what dreadful danger can I incur, though I should occasionally relax the reins of watchfulness, and, from time to time, indulge in a few fashionable and less flagrant vices and follies?”

You may guard the doctrines of legality by the best securities that you can devise; you may tell your votary that his obedience must at least be sincere, or predominant, or habitual. But if, instead of compelling men to bring every tenet to the law and to the testimony, and form all their principles upon the safe and unerring standard contained in

the pages of inspiration, you allow them to suppose that they are at liberty to break through the sacred fence, which the God of heaven has drawn around the path of duty, and to mould and form his law in some degree to their own taste and interests, it is utterly impossible to fix limits to their encroachments, or to conjecture when or where they will stop in their wild and desultory career. As his guides are unable to agree upon a substitute for that perfect righteousness which the law prescribes, or determine the amount of sincerity necessary for the justification of the sinner, he himself is left at liberty to fix the tale and quality of his performances, and it is not very likely that he will carry his virtuous efforts to any very painful height, nor exhibit any extraordinary or excessive zeal, either for the general interests of godliness, or for his personal holiness. If he dream that the law will yield at all, instead of endeavouring to rise to the height of its requirements, he finds it far more desirable to bring it a degree lower, till he reduce it completely to his own miserable level. Were such dogmas as these supported by any appearance of truth, to go abroad into a world so depraved and abandoned as ours, where every succeeding generation adds to the profligacy and degeneracy of its predecessor, instead of restoring the innocence and rectitude of Eden, the fact is, if we may judge of the future from the past, that, in the lapse of a few generations, every vestige of moral-

ity would disappear, and the persuasion would universally prevail that men might be saved without any repentance, or reformation, or holiness at all.

But could any such ungodly or licentious results be apprehended from the general knowledge, and cordial belief of the glorious gospel of the blessed God; that pure and sacred system, which, wherever it goes, carries along with it, not only a manifestation of the compassion and kindness of the Most High, but likewise a discovery of the sinfulness of sin, and of the guilt and unworthiness of man; which never speaks of the sovereign efficacy of the remedy, without reminding us of the unequalled virulence and desperate malignity of the disease; which never announces the riches of redeeming mercy, nor the power and grace of the generous and almighty Saviour, without broadly and forcibly proclaiming, that the wages of sin are death, and that without shedding of blood there is no remission of iniquity; which never tells us of the benevolence of the God of love, without bringing to our view, in distinct and lively representation, that his law, like himself, is perfect, immutable, and eternal, and that the wide universe, with all that it encloses, shall sooner be laid in ruins, than one sentence or syllable of all that it contains shall be despoiled of its honour, or stripped of its authority and rights; which never tells us of the all-sufficiency of the atonement without impressing on us in a form the most emphatic and solemn,

that such is the inviolability of the law, and such the turpitude of sin, that when it has once infected the constitution, and stained the character, it is utterly beyond the transgressor's reach to make the slightest reparation for his fault, or by his personal deeds to merit the divine regard, and that he must either renounce all reliance on his own performances and worth, and betake himself simply and entirely to the righteousness of Immanuel, receive salvation as the gift of free, absolute, and unsearchable grace, or be undone for ever? Can that man, whose faith is founded upon the statements of the gospel, trifle with the denunciations of the law, or coolly indulge in any of the courses which it prohibits, when he knows, that rather than allow its prerogative to be infringed without adequate satisfaction for the injury, "he sent his own Son to the cross?" Such a man must stand in awe and not sin, and be effectually constrained to deny all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. A more affecting and irresistible proof than this the Almighty could not give of his inflexible determination to fulfil his word, and inflict on every transgression the full amount of the vengeance which it merits. The man who with this fact before him is capable of perpetrating the crimes which Jehovah has condemned, is beyond the reach of moral motives. His mind is proof against the most overbearing arguments, and his heart closed against the influence of the most en-

dearing love. If such a fact cannot withhold him from the practice of iniquity, what is there in existence which can disturb him in the career of vice, or deter him from his unhallowed and heaven-dar-ing deeds? He surely has hardihood sufficient to brave all the denunciations of future vengeance, and encounter the most mighty thunders which guard the celestial throne.

## PART II.

Whilst we have been expatiating on these topics, perhaps some objector has been impatient for an opportunity to interrupt the current of this argumen-tation, and to tell us, "that the obligation of the law, the sinfulness and danger of sin, and the inflexibility of Divine justice, may reasonably be ex-pected to deter from transgression those who are under the law, whose eternity is suspended upon their obedience to its precepts, and who through life are kept in a state of uncertainty whether they shall finally be saved or lost; but that these con-siderations can have no influence upon the mind or conduct of a believer, who from the very circum-stance of his having embraced the atonement, and made it the sole ground of his reliance, must re-gard himself as placed for ever beyond the reach of danger, who must necessarily imagine that sin can do him no future injury; and therefore, from the very nature of his principles, must inevitably

be led without the most distant dread of punishment, freely to indulge in every worldly passion and vicious affection; so that in spite of all our labour to fortify and guard the gospel from abuse, the very genius and spirit of the system necessarily tend to conduct its genuine and consistent votaries to practical ungodliness."

If such were his disposition, there can be no doubt that the believer preserves in as full vigour as formerly, every mental and corporeal power requisite to qualify him for the work of corruption, and fit him for the drudgery of satan. But though he retain the ability, since in such a case as this, every thing depends upon the state of the will, before we peremptorily conclude that he must be peculiarly liable to transgression, and in uncommon hazard of living in sin, is it not of importance to ascertain how his affections stand in relation to the duties which he owes to the Almighty? The inhabitants of heaven enjoy, in full perfection, every natural faculty and power: but whilst their hearts are filled with love to God, and their wills supremely and intensely attached to his service, do we ever dread an insurrection amongst the hosts of light, or tremble for the stability of the eternal throne, because it is placed where creatures of the most mighty minds surround it, each of whom possesses the physical capacity of rising in rebellion against his Maker, and of violating the high and sacred authority of his everlasting laws? And whilst we willing-

ly grant that the believer has the power to transgress, if on examination we shall find, instead of retaining an inclination to offend, that he has a deep and inveterate abhorrence of evil, that his affections are strongly and immovably set against all that is base and criminal, that his heart is right with God, and that his most fond and abiding desire is to walk at all times so as to please Him, how can the continuance of his natural ability to offend, in the slightest degree endanger the purity or constancy of his obedience?

There is no need whatever for blinking the question. To give our opponents the full benefit of their objection, just allow, for the sake of argument, that a believer, as they assume, should actually fancy that no sin could hurt him, before we positively conclude that this imagination must lead to any pernicious result, we must first examine the other articles with which it is conjoined. In the natural world the properties of bodies are essentially affected by the situation in which they are placed. Take, for example, hydrogen. By itself, no substance is more inflammable: but when combined, as it has been by the God of nature, with oxygen, another combustible body, it forms the harmless and well known compound of water, which possesses any quality but that of inflammability. And in the moral world the practical effects of every opinion depend upon the other tenets with which it is held. If the mercy of God were to be detached from his other attri-

butes, the consequences would be most fatal to morality, for under a Being that was all mercy, and this mercy infinite, what could restrain his creatures from unbounded profligacy and vice? But whilst belief in his infinite mercy, is united, as in the case of every Christian, with faith in his infinite wisdom, justice, and power, what damage can ensue to the cause of religion and of righteousness? In precisely the same manner, we shall find, that even granting that the obnoxious notion in question formed a part of a believer's creed, it is so enclosed and embedded, or rather blended with other articles, which, from the very nature of his principles, he necessarily must hold, that it never can expose the earnestness nor perpetuity of his obedience to the smallest hazard.

As we already have had occasion to observe, the circumstance in general, which first compels a sinner to have recourse to the salvation of the gospel, is a conviction of his own guilt and ruin, arising from the affecting display, which the sufferings and death of the Redeemer afford him, of the infinite evil and danger of iniquity. Till sensible of his total helplessness and wretchedness, which never can be accomplished till he sees the necessity of the substitution of the Saviour in his room, no man will ever accept the salvation of the gospel as the unspeakable gift of God, nor cling to its gracious provisions as his only and his delighted plea. Who will purchase at an immense expense an article

which he regards as useless; or travel over half the circumference of the globe in quest of an object which he possesses at home? And what sinner will break up the fair and costly fabric of trust, which by his religious and moral duties he has long been labouring to rear, quit all his cherished dependence upon the law, and betake himself simply and entirely to the hope which redemption sets before him, till he discovers that all his own righteousness is as filthy rags, and that, if left to make head against his own trespasses and sins, he must inevitably and most miserably perish? That danger surely must be extreme, from which deliverance is hailed as an unutterable and invaluable blessing.

It is, however, in this high and supreme estimation in which every believer holds the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is with emotions of the most intense delight, and grateful transport, that he welcomes to his heart the gospel salvation. Without a thankful, an enraptured reception of the adorable Redeemer, whatever he may expect or profess, no man can be in a state of grace, nor have the smallest claim, in the scriptural sense of the term, to the appellation of a follower of Christ. The Bible uniformly represents the Saviour as being all in all, not only in the purchase and application of redemption, but likewise in the esteem and affections of his people. In him, by whom they are justified, they also glory. They count every thing but loss for his sake; they rejoice in his cross, and deter-

mine to know nothing but him and his crucifixion. Unless, therefore, we prefer him to our chief joy, and make him our all in all, however decent and sober we may prove in our deportment, or whatever flaming pretensions we may make to piety and zeal, we can have no part nor lot in the blessings of his salvation, nor any more legitimate right than a Jew or Mahometan, to the name of a Christian. For if any man prefer not the Saviour to every earthly relative and enjoyment, he is not worthy to be called a disciple: if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ he shall be accursed.

Now after having felt such penetrating and realizing impressions of the sinfulness of sin, and the dreadful doom which it deserves; after having seen that sin has exposed him to the displeasure of the Most High, and to inconceivable and never-ending woe; after having seen that hell naked before him, and that destruction without a covering to which his offences were rapidly transmitting him; after having seen that within the wide confines of creation, no hope, no safety could be found for his guilty, troubled, trembling, perishing spirit, but under the mysterious and hallowed expiation of the cross; after having been compelled, by a sense of his own imminent and awful peril, to renounce all for its sake, and with feelings of the most exalted adoration and most overpowering transport, to embrace it as his only deliverance from the wrath which his sins had deserved, is it credible that this man shall

no sooner place his feet within the limits of that venerable and sacred asylum which the atonement affords, than he will return to the eager and unrestrained pursuit of that evil and abominable thing which is alike the abhorrence of his God, and the disgrace and curse of his own immortal soul ?

Does a man look with horror upon that animal or instrument, which had nearly extinguished his own life, and which has actually proved fatal to his best benefactor and friend ? Does he instinctively recoil from the sight and the society of the monster whom he dreads, and avoid with care the courses which he holds in the deepest detestation ? And with all the clear and enlarged views before him which the gospel discloses, of the malignity of sin, and the dreadful doom awaiting it ; with all his painful knowledge of the irreparable, the insufferable misery in which it has involved millions of the children of men, and the amazing amount of agony and sorrow which it brought upon the Holy One of God, is it consistent with any principle in reason or nature to believe, even supposing that he had no apprehension of any damage that it could inflict upon himself, that the Christian will convert the refuge from punishment which the cross confers, into an occasion for coolly and perseveringly indulging in habits of vice and profligacy ? Does the mind revolt from the horrid and monstrous idea that Lot within the security of his retreat at Zoar, even granting that he was persuaded that he himself

could have incurred no harm from the action, before the last sad shrieks of the men of Sodom had died away on his ear, or the flames had become extinct in which their bodies were consumed, would have abandoned himself to the crimes for which he had seen such just and signal judgment descending on the inhabitants of the plain? Granting that Noah regarded the defence of his wooden habitation as absolutely impregnable, and that he was convinced, that, whilst he remained within its enclosures, no calamity could assail him; whilst he felt the beak of his floating mansion ever and anon grazing on the carcases of his former acquaintances and fellow-labourers, and far as the eye could stretch it found nothing to rest on, but a world made one hideous waste of water, does it surpass the utmost power of human belief to suppose, that just then he could have found in his heart a desire to cherish the infidelity, the impenitence, and the heaven-daring deeds for which he had witnessed the crowded ranks of the generation around him, overwhelmed with such complete and unsparing destruction? And when sin has wrought such terrible desolation in the earth, hurried such multitudes of our brethren into everlasting perdition, when it is denounced by the God of heaven as the object of his unmitigated hatred and vengeance, when it has exposed our own souls to such awful jeopardy, and inflicted such a combination of sufferings upon our compassionate and adorable Re-

deemer, is it credible that the believer will ever esteem it, live in it and practise it with calmness and delight? What mighty service has it done to the sons of Adam, or what is there in its own nature so attractive, fascinating or lovely, that he cannot part with its presence; that he must burden himself with its weight; and that, weak and exhausted as he is, when he flees from approaching wrath, he must drag it along with him on the road to Calvary, and by its detested presence pollute and profane the hallowed region that encircles the cross?

Admitting, therefore, that the Christian should imagine that he has such a hold of the atonement as will completely protect him in future from all the consequences of his crimes, and preserve him from ever being again subjected to any marks of the Divine displeasure; after all that he has already suffered from its tyranny, after all the dreadful disasters which it has brought upon his brethren, after all the unparalleled anguish which it imposed upon the Almighty Redeemer, and the horrid fate which it was preparing for himself; can we really persuade ourselves that this man, with all this knowledge fully and distinctly before him, will coolly and deliberately return to the commission of this most frightful and enormous evil? Because a man by the singular care and skill of his physician has been recovered from a mortal malady, and has gotten his constitution fortified against the fatal effects of the disease for the time to come; will he for the

gratification of repeating the cure, subject himself anew to all the weakness and langour, to all the pains and privations attending the complaint? Because, by the most extraordinary and supernatural means, a man has been saved from a conflagration or a shipwreck, occasioned by his own vice and folly, and, by some mysterious agency, such a degree of buoyancy and incombustibility has been imparted to his body, that he is now secured against perishing either by fire or by water; is it likely that this man, for the purpose of putting the efficacy of his charm to the proof, or of enjoying the surprise and pleasure of another deliverance, will deliberately expose himself to a renewal of all the agitation and dread which he endured during the horrors of the former hours of peril? And, when the interposition of grace was so remote from all that we could have claimed or expected, when by a miracle of sovereign mercy we have been so strangely preserved from the direful effects of our transgressions; even on the most favourable supposition that can be devised, on the supposition that sin could not ultimately injure us, is it credible, is it possible, that any man in his senses, will act a part so completely in opposition to every dictate of reason and religion, that, for the purpose of trying the strength of his spiritual specific, or of enjoying the marvellousness of another rescue, he will revive all the anxiety and distress, all the trepidation and distraction, all the alarm and terror which he sustained during

the momentous and never to be forgotten process, by which he was first brought to the Saviour, and compelled to fix his undivided and delighted dependence upon the liberal and unsearchable provisions of his grace?

On the very lowest supposition, therefore, that we can form, on the supposition that fear alone is the cause that drives him to the Saviour, instead of indulging in sin, we see that it is far more natural and reasonable to conclude that the pardoned sinner will hate it with a perfect hatred, and shun every false and wicked way.

But if the feeling of fear may be expected to operate on his mind as a preservative from sin, how greatly must the efficacy of this principle be strengthened, when, to the influence of fear, we add the force of detestation, of deep, inveterate, unconquerable detestation and abhorrence? If the devastations created by sin can be regarded as sufficient to have deterred Lot and Noah from indulging in the vices which they had seen prove so fatal to their contemporaries; how much more completely must they have been withheld from every desire to commit them, when actuated by an innate invincible antipathy against these nefarious and enormous practices? If the recollection of the distraction and dread which he felt amidst the ravages of a conflagration, or the terrors of a shipwreck, can be supposed capable of preventing a man from renewing these scenes of calamity, even though he

were assured that they could not ultimately destroy him; how much more powerfully must he be kept back from such a rash and irrational deed, when to the remembrance of former danger, is joined a principle of strong insurmountable aversion and horror of being enveloped with flame, or immersed in the ocean?

And if we too shall find that the believer is not more fully aware of the danger of sin than of its evil; and that he is not more thoroughly terrified for its destructive consequences, than penetrated with an abiding irreconcileable hatred against its evil and odious nature: granting that he were ever so firmly persuaded that in future no sin could harm him, so long as he retains these sentiments respecting it, how is it possible that this notion could ever relax his diligence in duty, or induce him to submit to the base and loathsome principle which his soul abhors?

Now, it will very soon appear that this is precisely the affection which the Christian bears to sin.

We have just now been speaking of the danger which rouses his alarm, and compels him in all the vehemence of despair to speed his flight to the strong-hold which grace has provided, and in all the ardour of importunity to solicit an interest in the gospel salvation. But what is it that excites these overcoming fears; that raises the Saviour so high in his estimation; that leads him to regard the redemption of the cross with sentiments of such

profound and enraptured delight, admiration, gratitude, and joy, that it absorbs every other object and consideration, and rules in his heart unrivalled and alone? Is his sense of danger totally separated from all consciousness of guilt and demerit? Does he view his perilous situation as the effect of chance or accident? Does he contemplate the salvation of the gospel as a release from the power of an unreasonable and exasperated despot? or regard it as a deliverance from some tremendous but irresistible calamity, which, though he could neither avoid nor bear, he himself is no more blameable for its existence, than for the shock of an earthquake or the fall of a planet?

No: whilst reason and revelation concur to prove that the Lord is infinitely good and gracious, the Father of mercies, and the God of peace, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but does good unto all, and seeks the welfare of the most profligate and abandoned, by commanding them to turn to him and live; under his mild and beneficent administration, the believer knows that the upright and the innocent can have nothing to suffer or to fear; that they may walk abroad amongst his works, in all the confidence of security, and claim the unremitting exercise of his almighty protection and boundless liberality and love. The only circumstance, therefore, under the omnipotent and universal reign of the Great Supreme, which can disturb the tranquillity, or

endanger the safety of any of his subjects, is sin; and though an apprehension of danger may be the first thing which attracts a Christian's attention, and awakens his anxiety and terror, it is guilt which, in reality, creates his danger, which constitutes the very strength and substance of his misery, which ultimately and permanently affects his mind, and engrosses his most painful and distracting thoughts.

But a conviction of guilt is very different from a sense of danger, or a dread of impending and dire destruction, brought on without our knowledge or our fault. Though repentance and fear are frequently conjoined, no two things can in their own nature be more distinct and independent; and no two things are in fact more frequently separated. A man, who in his sleep has been placed on the battlements of a lofty building, or carried to the verge of a precipice, may be afraid, or terrified even to distraction by a sight of his perilous situation; but he can have no remorse nor contrition for the frightful condition into which he has been brought. And as there may be alarm without any compunction, so, on the other hand, there may be keen and cutting regret, without any fear or danger. A rude repulse to the modest application of a suppliant, a surly reception of the well-meant attentions of a child, an ungracious word to a generous benefactor, or the recollection of an act of coldness or unkindness to a dead, or far

distant friend, may cover us with confusion, and send through our soul a pang of the most pungent and insupportable self condemnation, even when it is manifest, from the nature of the case, that it is utterly impossible to apprehend the slightest personal hurt, either immediate or remote, from what we have done.

But, whilst these two principles are so radically and essentially distinct, it is not for a moment to be forgotten that it is the last of them that takes possession of a believer's heart, and pervades all his thoughts and feelings. It is because he has sinned, that he has become obnoxious to suffering ; and because his transgressions have exceeded, that such fearful judgments overhang him. Knowing that God is good, supremely, absolutely, infinitely good, he is certain that sin never would have been threatened with a doom more severe than what is strictly just, and that great as his own danger is, it is not in the smallest article more dreadful than what he most righteously deserves.

From the day, therefore, that he feels his need of the redemption that is in Christ, he is less occupied with the destruction which impends him, than with the magnitude of his guilt, which renders such inconceivable destruction due. He regards sin not as his calamity, but as his crime : he sees that there is no penalty denounced in the law, but what it has most equitably merited, nor any sufferings in the place of perdition, that can ex-

ceed its just deserts. With a law in his hand, with which he can find no fault at all; with a conscience reproaching him for crimes, for which he had no cause, and for which he can plead no excuse; with proofs innumerable and overpowering of the matchless perfections and eternal excellencies of his Creator, and a world before him all bright with the marks of Divine beneficence and skill; with the melting fact, deep in his remembrance, that whilst he was multiplying offences against the God of heaven, this God was loading him with benefits; and that, though he had refused to renounce his trespasses, this God, whom they had insulted and provoked, had for his sake surrendered his own Son to the dishonour and pains of an ignominious and bloody death, he is ashamed and confounded for all the evils which he has done, and unable so much as to lift up his eyes to heaven: he smites on his breast, and in the bitterness of his spirit exclaims, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Now, we would ask, is it this man, who has the most penetrating and impressive ideas of the sinfulness of sin, and of the enormity of his own iniquities; is it this man whose soul is humbled and broken for all the dishonour which his provocations have done to the God of grace, and the death which they have inflicted on his ever blessed Son; is it this man who, for the wickedness which he has wrought, abhors himself, and repents in

dust and in ashes ; is it this man, who cannot bear the review of his past life, nor the sight of his own vile and loathsome heart; and who, though the God of love, in the infinity of his mercy should pardon his iniquities and blot out his sins, never can forget his transgressions, nor forgive himself for the foul and odious deeds which he has perpetrated ; is it this man, who condemns himself as the chief of sinners, and who can find no words sufficiently strong to express the love, admiration, and gratitude, with which he regards that Divine and adorable Redeemer, who had compassion on a wretch so vile, and extended mercy to a rebel so unworthy as he ; is this precisely the man who, with the greatest justice, may be suspected of being most ready to return to the love of vice, and the most eager and indefatigable in the practice of iniquity ? Is it the man who has the greatest dread of the ills of poverty, captivity, and exile, who is most likely to expose himself to their endurance ? Is it the man who has the most unmeasured abhorrence of the meanness and infamy of falsehood, duplicity, and cunning, of whom we have the greatest reason to be afraid of acting the most base, double, and designing part ? And whilst the Christian, above all the men in the world, has the most painful depressing and agonising sense of the guilt, impiety, and vileness of his former practices, is he exactly the man who may most fairly be suspected of tamely yielding to the dictates of corrup-

tion, of deliberately putting his neck in the yoke of iniquity, and of working all unrighteousness with constancy and greediness?

If therefore, as we have had occasion to remark, a bare knowledge of the danger attendant on iniquity, can be supposed sufficient to deter a man from the commission of sin, how greatly must the influence of this preservative be increased, when, to this fear of suffering, is added a rooted, inveterate, irreconcilable hatred of transgression? If it can be supposed, that the devastations created by sin, were sufficient to have intimidated Lot and Noah from indulging in the vices which they had seen prove so fatal to their contemporaries; how much more powerfully must they have been withheld from every desire to commit them, when actuated by an innate invincible antipathy against these horrid and enormous abominations? And if the fear of danger can be thought capable of deterring the Christian from the commission of evil, how much more completely must he be preserved from the love and practice of wickedness, when he contemplates it with emotions of the greatest horror, and feels for it the most pure and implacable hatred?

Granting, therefore, that he should actually believe that no act of vice which he can perpetrate, could in future disturb his peace or endanger his safety, so long as he regards sin as the most dreadful evil in existence, and his soul holds it in

the most unmixed, and in the deepest detestation, we find that it is utterly incredible that he will ever love it, live in it, or cleave to it with a fond and unyielding tenacity.

Having thus seen the sinner, alarmed by a sense of his danger, and oppressed with a consciousness of the number and the demerit of his offences, abandoning all dependence upon his own works of righteousness, and repairing anxiously and earnestly to the grace of the gospel, in order to follow out this argument, and still farther to illustrate the subject before us, let us a little longer attend to the workings of his mind, and mark the purpose for which he applies to the compassionate and all-sufficient Saviour.

When, by the very nature of his principles, he is led to entertain uncommonly elevated views of the purity and spirituality of the law, and of the holiness of God; when he knows that sin is the unchangeable object of the divine displeasure, and that it is against it that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven; when he is assured that it is the cause of all the evils that he either feels or fears, that it has degraded his nature, robbed him of his peace, unsifted him for heaven, and excluded him from the sublime and beatific presence of the ever-blessed and all-glorious Jehovah; and thus has proved alike his disgrace and misery: for what purpose are we to believe that he makes his address to the holy and almighty Immanuel? Does he come

for happiness apart from holiness? Does he solicit salvation separately from sanctification? Is his demand loud, earnest, ardent for freedom from wrath, whilst he profers no petition for the renovation of his nature, the subjugation of his iniquities, and his deliverance from the body of sin and death?

Did ever an offender, at the very moment that he seriously and fervently entreated the forgiveness of a former act of rudeness or violence, persist in accumulating fresh insults and outrages upon his injured benefactor? Did ever a criminal, borne down by a consciousness of guilt, and trembling for the sentence awaiting his misdeeds, bring the blood of murder to the tribunal of that judge, who had his life at his disposal, and whose clemency he humbly and importunately implored? And, knowing how rank and foul his offences smell in the sight of Heaven, has the church ever produced the prodigy of a penitent, of a believer, who brought a soul polluted and degraded by the presence, and the love of vice, to the bar of the Almighty, and manifested a clinging inflexible adherence to his crimes at the very moment that he approached him for mercy; who solicited pardon whilst his heart cleaved to his trespasses; who interceded for salvation without asking sanctification; who prayed for happiness without making any request for holiness; who expected to be saved in his sins, or wished to be carried to the regions of

bliss, in the midst of his foul and loathsome abominations? Did language like this ever issue from the lips, or desires like these ever steam from the heart of a single individual, who seriously sought an interest in the gospel salvation? “Lord, I know that sin is thy abhorrence; but it is my delight and love: I know that evil cannot dwell with thee; but I neither can nor will dwell without it: I know that Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; but it is my labour and ambition to build again those things which he has thrown down: I know that he was wounded for my transgressions, and bruised for mine iniquities, and, that for the wickedness which I had committed, his soul was in an agony of sorrow; but I want pardon that I may be spared to have the opportunity of doing more to his dishonour, of again putting him to open shame, of augmenting the intensity of his sufferings, and of crucifying him afresh.”

Is the burden of his sins painful; is the weight of them intolerable; and does he hate them with a perfect hatred? and can we persuade ourselves that he will cherish any attachment to their presence, or any desire to prolong their detested and baneful dominion? Galled and sinking under the tyranny of his cold hearted oppressor, did ever a slave supplicate his benefactor, not to procure his emancipation, but to fortify his body against blows and bruises, and steel his mind against insult, ignominy and abuse, that he might at once perform

more work for his master, and furnish the barbarian with the odious gratification of more fully feeding his appetite for torture, by enabling him to multiply at pleasure the inflictions of his malignity and cruelty? Did ever a patient, racked and tormented by gout or stone, apply to his physician, not for the removal of the cause of his distress, but for the means of strengthening his body to sustain greater inroads from the complaint, and bear new degrees of suffering? And, when it is sin which has filled the believer with grief and shame; when it is for this that he goes mourning all the day, and that his soul is sore broken and bowed down; when it is this which has deprived him of the favour of the Lord, and exposed him to all the evils which he has endured in time, or can dread in eternity; when it is this which has rendered him vile in his own esteem, and placed him as an outcast from the society and enjoyments of all the holy and happy inhabitants of creation, is it credible, when he first appears before the Saviour, that he will supplicate the remission of the sentence of condemnation, whilst he makes no mention of the wickedness and depravity which have deserved it; that he will entreat for pardon, whilst he advances no request for the destruction of the cause of all his woes; pray for the free forgiveness of his transgressions, whilst he continues to be the victim of the crimes and passions, which have ruined his peace, forfeited the favour

of the Most High, and involved him in the lowest and most insufferable wretchedness ?

It is for pardon, indeed, that the sinner turns his longing eyes to the Redeemer, and that he bows in fervent supplication before the throne of mercy ; but it is for pardon in close inseparable connexion with holiness : he seeks reconciliation with God ; but it is such reconciliation as is accompanied with fitness to enjoy his presence, and meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light : he begs the restoration of the favour of the Almighty ; but it is that he may love him and live to him, that he may be an instrument of usefulness on earth, and a servant of his in heaven. While the glorious excellencies and perfections of Jehovah, attract and charm him, and excite an irrepressible desire to resemble him perfectly, and enjoy him fully ; the compassion and grace displayed in redemption, completely overpower him, and carry him irresistibly forward in every holy and beneficent enterprise. His heart's desire and daily prayer, accordingly, are as strongly and ardently directed to be sanctified wholly, as to be justified freely ; and he is not more importunate and persevering in his requests to have his iniquities blotted out and his guilt forgiven, than for the creation within him of a clean heart and the renewal of a right spirit.

And whilst these are the ruling predominant feelings of his heart, is it credible that he will

contradict them in his conduct? If it be a lively sense of pain, an aversion to sickness, and a desire to renew the labours and the duties of life, which bring the sick to the physician, is it likely that they who have been most anxious to obtain health, when they have secured the possession of their object, will be the first to throw away that invaluable blessing, and reduce themselves to their former weakness, exhaustion and suffering? Is it a love of freedom and independence, a longing to return to the land of his fathers, and recover the fondly cherished joys that solaced and cheered the days of his youth, that make the high toned soul of the slave impatient to burst the chains of oppression, and regain the rights and privileges of our common nature? and are we to suppose that the liberated captive shall no sooner embrace the dear object of his warmest prayers, than he will return to the drudgery and thraldom of his former bondage; resume his fetters and his toils; associate with the despised outcasts of humanity; take his full share of the tasks and the treatment of the working gang; with them writhe beneath the cutting scourge, and eat the bread of the broken-hearted? And when the believer knows that sin has provoked his God, and disturbed the peace of society; that it has brought disgrace and ruin on his own soul, and procured the death of his adorable Redeemer; when he knows that it is the essence of all mischief and misery, and when he hates it with

a perfect hatred; when his heart's desire and his prayer are to be formed after the image of him that created him, and completely and for ever delivered from the presence and the power of evil; when it is for these precious and invaluable blessings that he makes his earnest ardent application to him who alone can save him: can we believe that no sooner shall his hands embrace the invaluable boon which he sought, than he will deliberately return to the bondage which he dreads, and subject himself anew to the irksome and galling yoke which he abhors? Whilst he admires the forbearance which spared him amidst his provocations, and adores the grace which provided such a great and glorious Saviour from all the frightful consequences of his crimes; whilst in his heart he is exclaiming "what manner of love is this which God hath bestowed upon the children of men! what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits!" is it possible that he can so totally pervert every idea of right and of wrong, as to imagine that he shall discharge the immense, the infinite debt of love and of gratitude which he owes him, by insulting his authority and violating his laws? While the kindness and generosity of God in redemption completely transport him, and he is longing to resemble him fully and live to him entirely; while he regards the Lord Jesus Christ as the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely; while he glories in his cross, and counts every

thing but loss for his sake ; while he hears that this is the love of God, that we keep his sayings, and is told by the Saviour, “ Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you :” is it credible, is it possible that this man will live to himself, and fulfil the appetites and passions of a carnal and corrupt nature ; that he will grieve his dearest friend, and dishonour his best and greatest benefactor ? Can a man travel eastward, at the very time that he is advancing westward ? Can he keep his eye intently fixed on heaven above, at the very time that it is immoveably rivitted to the earth spread below him ? or love God supremely, at the very time that he delights in what God hates, and practices what he has most positively prohibited ?

Do his anxiety and alarm for the profane and the immoral around him, who are living in indolence and sin, feeding themselves without fear, and freely indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, invade his hours of rest, banish sleep from his eyes, cause him to water his couch with his tears, force him to send up in their behalf the most fervent and incessant intercessions to the habitation of mercy, compel him to strive with the obstinate, reprove the ungodly, and remonstrate with the hardened, to dispatch ambassadors of peace to all the ends of the earth, conduct schools, patronize Bible associations, support religious and moral institutions of every form and name, and

keep every engine in steady and powerful motion to rouse the careless, and reclaim the vicious and the abandoned? And with all this before us, can we reconcile ourselves to the unnatural, to the monstrous belief that this man, by submitting to the mean and degrading drudgery of sin, will be guilty of the inconsistency, the absurdity, and baseness of promoting by his practice what he condemns by his principles, of sanctioning in his own person what he deplores in others, and of trembling for their crimes, whilst he manifests no fear nor uneasiness for his own?

Thus then, granting the very worst that can be alleged, granting that the believer has adopted, or that by the nature of his principles he inevitably must adopt, the revolting tenet that no sin can injure him, we find that while it continues united with other articles, which we unquestionably know that he must habitually and necessarily hold, it must prove perfectly harmless, and never can lead to one immoral thought, nor word, nor action; and therefore, so long as it is confined to the genuine and consistent adherents of the cross, we see that every apprehension of danger from it to the interests of virtue, is just as visionary and baseless as to dread, from the combustible nature of the elements which enter into the composition of water, that the rain will set our fields on fire, or that the ocean, which encircles it, will burn up the globe.

But we have hitherto been combating a phan-

tom, and defending our system against ideal fears. To give our opponents the utmost advantage which they can possibly desire from their objection, our argument has been adapted to a supposition which never ought to have been supposed.

When or where does the believer learn that sin can never hurt him; that his salvation can be separated from holiness, and his safety rendered perfectly consistent with the love and practice of iniquity? When or where is he taught that the subjects of grace may offend with impunity, and that the man, who has been once accepted in the Beloved, may afterwards live to himself, and coolly fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind? Does he learn these impure and pernicious notions from that Bible which tells him, that the same Jesus, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, came also to save his people from their sins? which informs him, that believers are predestinated to be holy, and without blame before God in love? that Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it might be holy and without blemish? Is it from that Bible which tells him that those that were sometime alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet now hath Christ reconciled in the body of his flesh through

death, to present them holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight ; if they continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel ? Is it from that Bible which tells him that the people of God shall be all righteous ; that they are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ ; and that sin shall not have dominion over them, because they are not under the law but under grace ? Is it from that Bible which tells him, that if he live after the flesh, he shall die ; that all unrighteousness is sin ; and that the wages of sin is death ? Is it from that Bible which tells him, that they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts ; and that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, and all things are become new, and all things are of God ? Is it from that Bible which exhorts us to abide in Christ, to walk even as he also walked ; and to hold that fast which we have, that no man take our crown ? Is it from that Bible which commands us to take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God ; and to exhort one another daily, whilst it is called to day, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin : adding, that we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end ? Is it from that Bible which asks, how two can walk together except they be agreed ; and inquiries, what

fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness; and what communion hath light with darkness; and what concord hath Christ with Belial? Is it from that Bible which affirms, your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you; and which declares, thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God? Is it from that Bible which assures us, that he that endureth to the end shall be saved; but that, if any man draw back, God will have no pleasure in him; and which addresses us in such language as this, Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you; if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are?

Is it precisely from such declarations as these, with which the sacred oracles every where abound, that the believer is instructed to infer that sin cannot injure him; and that, from the day that the sentence of his acquittal is pronounced, he may persevere with absolute impunity to heap up crimes and outrages against the God of grace?

The pages of inspiration, indeed, furnish us with the most ample and cheering security against all the penal consequences of transgression: but this is not by annihilating the evil of sin, nor by chang-

ing its nature, nor by removing God's displeasure against it, but by altering the relation to it in which we stand ; by inspiring us with impressive views of its odiousness, vileness, and baseness ; by filling us with fear of its presence, and hatred and horror of its pollution ; by delivering us not only from its punishment, but also from its power; by breaking its galling and ignominious yoke, and giving God the possession and sovereignty of our hearts. These precious and delightful truths we are warranted to deduce from the statements which pervade both the Old Testament and the New, respecting the design of God, in making any the subjects of his grace, and the care which he employs to preserve them in the enjoyment and exercise of every holy temper and principle. It is thus that we are told that he has formed his people for himself, that they might shew forth his praise, and that we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation ; that we should shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. . It is thus that our Redeemer informs us, ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. It is thus that an apostle tells us, I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God; and adds, wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be mar-

ried to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. It is thus that Jehovah, in the new covenant, binds himself to put his law in the inward parts of his people, and write it in their hearts; to give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear him for ever; that he will not turn away from them to do them good, but will put his fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from him; that he will give them one heart, and will put a new spirit within them, and will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them an heart of flesh, that they may walk in his statutes, and keep his ordinances, and do them; and that he will sprinkle clean water upon them, and they shall be clean, and will put his Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in his statutes, and they shall keep his judgments and do them. And it is thus that the Lord Jesus Christ, in his last intercessory prayer, thus addressed his Father; Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are:—I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

When, therefore, we are brought into a state of grace, sin cannot have dominion over us, for we are otherwise occupied and employed. Our time, our talents, and affections are transferred to the service of another. They are surrendered

to the Lord, and consecrated to the honour and the interests of our Saviour. To him we live, and for him we labour. The love of Christ constrains us to live to him, who died for us, and who rose again. And thus, by being preserved in the love and fear of God, by building ourselves up in our most holy faith, by being stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and by walking in the Spirit, we are prevented from fulfilling the lust of the flesh, the wicked one toucheth us not, and we are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.

The perseverance of the saints indeed, is infallibly secured by the faithfulness and power of God, and the care and watchfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ: but this perseverance is indissolubly connected with their abstinence from sin, and their stedfast adherence to the faith and holiness of the gospel. Were it possible to conceive an instance of a Christian departing from the living God, and returning deliberately and cordially to the love and the practice of iniquity, his perdition would be just as certain as it would be severe. While God rests in his love, and Jesus is true to his promises to give unto his sheep eternal life, and never to leave nor forsake his people; such a case never can occur; but were the unparalleled event ever to happen, the consequences would be most dreadful. Under the economy

of Moses, the Jew, who had unwittingly slain a man, had protection in the cities of refuge; but if within the precincts of these hallowed retreats, he had presumptuously lifted up the hand of violence, and intentionally imbrued it in the blood of a brother, what defence could he then have expected to have screened him from the insulted laws of his country? Under the Christian dispensation, he who offends against the law has relief from the grace of the gospel: but if he turn this grace into licentiousness, if he transgress on principle, if he sin, that compassion and forbearance may abound, if he bring the stains of impurity within the sanctuary of mercy, and sport the blood of murder before the tribunal of justice; what can be the effect of such audacious and insufferable flagitiousness, but to be given up to the unmitigated rigour of the law, and left to endure all the sad fruits of his insolence and crimes? Horrific as this conclusion may appear, it does not carry the awful matter a single hair-breadth beyond the line where the apostle himself has placed it. “ If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy,

who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, where-with he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, “Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord; and again, The Lord shall judge his people.”

If, therefore, we thus find that the strength and substance of our misery consist in our wickedness, and that Christ came to save us from our sins; if we find that salvation consists in deliverance from the power, as well as from the punishment of iniquity, and in restoration to the image as well as the favour of God; if we find that we are preserved from danger by being kept from evil, and assured of the possession of everlasting bliss by being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and enabled to abound in all the fruits of righteousness to the glory and praise of God; then to talk of being saved without leaving our sins, is exactly the same as to speak of living without life, or being saved without salvation. Holiness is the very soul and essence of salvation. Without holiness we are still in our sins: and to be in our sins, is just another scriptural expression for being under condemnation, without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world.

Can a system which is founded on such truths ever hurt the morals of its subjects, or lead them

to indulge in indolence and vice? If told, that so long as we remain within the limits of the British isles, we shall not be consumed by the flames of Etna, nor fall victims to the plague at Constantinople, nor be swallowed up by the river of Egypt; will any man in his senses affirm, that, let him do what he will to destroy his life, he has now an express indefeasible assurance of its preservation; and upon the faith of what he calls an absolute promise, and for the purpose of demonstrating its infallibility, will he throw himself into the Nile, or inhale the tainted air of the Turkish metropolis, or bathe his body in floods of burning lava? The fallacy in such a conclusion is gross and glaring; and the metaphysics of such an argument, could not for one moment withstand the force of facts. This absolute promise places our safety, not upon the insusceptibility of our bodies of contagion, nor upon their buoyancy, nor their incombustibility, but upon our being kept at a distance from these causes of destruction. And when our security against the fatal effects of sin depends, not upon its nature being neutralized, nor upon our constitution being fortified against its pernicious influence, but upon our preservation from its power, upon our being kept back from its contamination, is it possible to conceive a more direct and palpable contradiction than to say, because by the grace of the gospel we are delivered from the dominion of sin, therefore, we

may safely submit to its authority; and since the Father of mercies by the ministry of reconciliation, has rescued us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, therefore we may ally ourselves to the workers of iniquity, and continue the willing slaves of Satan?

Thus then, on a pretty extensive view of the representation which the gospel gives us of the obligation of the law, and the necessity of obeying it, we see that it can fearlessly sustain a comparison with every competitor. It insinuates no demoralizing nor licentious notions about the sufficiency of our own imperfect and polluted performances, to meet the high and comprehensive demands of eternal justice; it instils no delusive and ruinous opinions about the mutability of the law, and its adjustment to human weakness and corruption; it propagates no soothing suggestions about the veniality and harmlessness of sin, or the possibility of washing away its guilt by our tears, and atoning for its former evils by the extent or strictness of our future fidelity and diligence; it circulates no presumptuous and degrading ideas about the laxness and suppleness of God, which will lead him to wink at vice, and bend in kindly accommodation to the taste and humours of his depraved and perverse creatures, and pleasantly accept their impure and worthless services in the room of genuine, cordial, and unqualified obe-

dience. Under the plausible pretext of substituting sincere for perfect obedience, it introduces no profligate device by which virtue may be banished from the earth, and the whole world made one scene of anarchy and crime. Such ungodly dogmas find no place within the pale of the Christian system. It tells us that the law of the Lord is right, that it is immutable and eternal, that all unrighteousness is sin, and that sin is exceeding sinful: it tells us that the threatenings of the law are serious, and that, however severe they may seem, none of them shall fall to the ground unfulfilled.

And as the character of God is identified with that of his law, by thus raising our conceptions of the excellence and holiness of this institution, the gospel also exalts our ideas of the perfections of its glorious and adorable Author. The law is a lively transcript of his own purity, and finding that every sentence of this law is so reasonable and just, so explicitly and powerfully calculated to secure the interests of righteousness, and so admirably adapted to promote the personal improvement and happiness of its subjects, and advance the peace and prosperity of the universe; and finding that the Lord Jehovah is so deeply and seriously in earnest, to preserve its honour and maintain its rights, how great, how incomprehensibly great must be the holiness of his own nature! By the proof which it gives us of his care to establish

the authority of the law, the gospel does justice to his character; it demonstrates that he is glorious in holiness, that evil cannot dwell with him, and that all iniquity is his abhorrence. It exalts his moral to a level with his natural perfections. It shows that his righteousness and holiness are just as absolute and unlimited as his knowledge and his power, and that he is not more superior to every natural weakness than to every moral defect. It claims for him the honour due to his name for every attribute in his nature, and, whilst it reveals him to his creatures seated at the head of creation, it shows his character to be more pure and lovely than the light with which he sits surrounded.

Now, it is with him that we have to do. The Lord is our king; the Lord is our lawgiver. It is in him that we live and move, and to him, at last, that we must render an account of all our conduct. The law is only the revelation of his moral will, and the standard by which we are to regulate our life and conversation. It is he who watches over its observance, and takes cognizance of its violations. And, knowing that it is with him that we have to do, and with these views before us which the gospel discloses of his nature and his law, if our tempers and habits are formed upon the principles of this sacred system, what manner of persons must we be in all holy conversation and godliness?

If, therefore, truth have any influence whatever

in framing our dispositions and practices, when the gospel imparts such transcendant discoveries of the spirituality and obligation of the law, and of the unchangeable, the infinite holiness of God; whether we consider him as an object of imitation, or regard him in the capacity of our Lawgiver and Judge, whether we admire his glorious excellencies, or revere the mandate to be holy even as he is holy, and perfect even as he is perfect, the conduct of that man which is modelled by the doctrines of christianity, must possess a vast and unspeakable superiority over the morals of all the men around him.

If such be the conclusion to which we are brought by a review of the truths which it inculcates, respecting the obligation of the law and the necessity of obeying it, we hope that the same inference will be confirmed by the attachment to holiness which it creates. To the illustration of this fact, it is now high time to proceed.

#### SECTION II.

The Gospel establishes the Law by the love to duty which it inspires.

All must be well aware of the great importance of such an active, powerful principle as love, upon the extent, the purity, the steadiness, and vigour of our obedience. If we would wish to secure the fidelity of our servants, there is no way in which we can so effectually succeed as by convincing them

of our concern for their welfare, and by thus inspiring them, in return, with sentiments of confidence and kindness. If we would wish to command the good-will and attachment of our neighbourhood, there is no method by which we can more easily and infallibly accomplish our purpose than by creating in them a principle of veneration and esteem. It would be of unspeakable advantage to a state if the government could infuse into the breast of every inhabitant of the country a love to his duty, and a devotion to his prince. If his affections were once in league with the laws, and if the sovereign were universally regarded with delight and with reverence; if each were emulous to please him, and anxious to yield him, not only all the homage and submission which he requires, but also all that attention and respect which the warmest friendship could dictate, and the most unbounded loyalty and zeal could render, the business of the administration would flow with smoothness and sweetness; contentment and harmony would pervade every rank, and rest with every family; the people, animated by one heart and one soul, would live united like a band of brothers; and happiness and security would encompass every habitation, and fill every heart. Instead of endeavouring to break loose from the just and salutary restraints of authority; instead of performing the services imposed with reluctance and langour, each would be forward to distinguish himself by his patriotism and public

spirit, and eager to fulfil with promptitude and faithfulness every obligation binding on him as a subject and a citizen. The desires of the king would be anticipated, and his utmost demands, not only readily and cordially granted, but even exceeded. Force and terror would be needless, and the obedience of the whole community would prove incomparably more uniform, active and efficient, than if their love were overlooked or slighted, and attempts made to substitute other springs of action in its place, and enforce habits of subjection and good order by the common, but paltry, expedients of the servile fear of punishment, and the mercenary hope of remuneration.

But if love be of such singular and unspeakable moment in secular affairs, it is of inexpressibly superior importance in the business of religion and of morality. Whenever love to duty predominates in the heart, the most cheerful, amiable, constant and indefatigable obedience will speedily and inevitably follow in the life. Duty then becomes the man's natural element. Strongly attached to its interests, and perfectly enraptured with its services, to divert him from its labours must be difficult, and to betray him into habits of vice and ungodliness must be utterly impossible. For who will forego the possession of what he loves, for the presence of what he dislikes and dreads? relinquish the pursuit of what constitutes the object of his delight and admi-

ration, to indulge in practices which he condemns and detests?

But where love to the courses which the law of God inculcates is awanting, nothing can supply its room, nor compensate for its absence. On the principles of natural religion the infidel may convince his pupil that obedience is his duty, and that transgression is his crime, and will ultimately prove his ruin. By appeals to a garbled and perverted revelation the legalist too may demonstrate to his disciple the excellence and value of morality, and set in dreadful array before him, the terrors which the Lord has denounced against the workers of iniquity. But though in the tone of the most commanding authority they may enjoin their auditors the thing that is right, though they may menace them with the most fearful doom for the breach or omission of what is inculcated, so long as the cheering and animating truths of the gospel are denied or concealed, disguised or kept back; so long as the endearing and enlivening principle of love withholds its kindly invigorating and resistless energy, their utmost efforts to persuade or terrify them into a firm and inflexible adherence to the dictates of reason and religion will prove utterly abortive. By their arguments and their eloquence they may carry complete conviction to the understanding of their hearers of the emptiness, the meanness, the despicableness of vice, and of the importance, the dignity, and obligation of virtue; they may evince

the dependence of the creature upon the Creator, and his responsibility to the justice of the Most High; they may annihilate every trace of suspicion and of doubt respecting the connexion betwixt time and eternity, and the inseparable relation which our condition there will bear to our conduct here; but so long as the minds of their votaries are alienated from the love of God, and supremely devoted to what he dislikes and prohibits, every attempt to drive them out of their unlawful courses will only make them cling more tenaciously to their favourite, though forbidden, practices.

If our moral constitution had retained its original integrity, and if it had possessed nothing to prevent the entrance of virtuous motives, or divert them from their destined purpose; all that, in such a case, would have been requisite to have engendered a firm and determined devotion to duty, would have been a clear discovery of what it comprised, and of the reasons by which we are bound to observe it. If every principle and affection had remained in complete unison with the will of God, we never would have meditated opposition to his pleasure; the dispositions and feelings of our hearts would at all times have coincided with the enactments of his law, and obedience to his authority, would have been just as easy and as natural as to think or to breathe.

But with natures so vitiated and depraved, with hearts so deplorably overrun with pollution and sin,

and placed in a world so deceitful and ensnaring as that which we occupy, what can the strength of reason, or the perceptions of the intellect, avail amidst the uproar of passion and the conflicts of temptation, amidst the resolute and unyielding reluctations of the most deep rooted and powerful inclinations and habits of the soul? What can reason or self-righteousness accomplish, when the hopes and the prospects of their remote and future rewards are obscured and beclouded by the smoke and dust of surrounding interests and pleasures, and the force of their best and strongest motives is counterbalanced, and borne down, by the weight of besetting indolence and sloth, by the attractions of present enjoyment and gain, or by the ascendancy of an inveterate innate love of evil? Is it to be expected that, amidst the tumult and clamour of disorderly appetites and passions, the faint voice of reason will be heard and regarded? or that, amidst the bewildering and fascinating creations of vice, the calm and sober lessons of prudence and virtue will be recollected and obeyed? The feeble barriers which these devices oppose against the encroachments of crime and folly, however fair and impregnable some may deem them, can afford no more effectual resistance to their assaults, than a mound of sand to a sweeping deluge, or the flimsy netting of a cobweb to the stroke of a cannon ball.

The obedience which is formed upon the low, the cold and narrow principles of hope and fear,

which are the main spring in the system of legality, must prove exceedingly stiff, heartless, partial, precarious and contracted. It can never rise to that high and holy elevation, nor take that wide and comprehensive range, necessary to meet all the dimensions of duty, and embrace the whole length and breadth of the law of Heaven. Without love to duty, the man will take care to furnish no more of that costly and painful article, than what is absolutely requisite to secure the special object which he has in view. Destitute of that warmth and cordiality, which bespeak the presence of a living principle of piety, all his performances will resemble the forced and artificial movements of a machine or a corpse. Having no root in himself, no settled nor lasting attachment to the services which he renders, he will exert himself no longer than during the continuance of those temporary stimulants which have been applied to his hopes and his fears, his understanding and his conscience. Having nothing to interest his affections, to warm and enlarge his heart, nothing to call out the energies of his nature, and rouse him to generous, arduous, and lofty enterprises, every thing, in the form of virtue in his conduct, will be little and narrow, constrained and formal, and dealt out with all the reluctance and parsimony of one who is driving a hard bargain, and who, provided that he can succeed at all, is resolved not to advance a single fraction more than what is absolutely necessary to ensure his success.

However important, therefore, invaluable and indispensable, we must acknowledge it to be, to convince the understanding of the extent and obligation of the law, still this is very far from being all that is awanting to beget genuine and permanent obedience. In creatures so depraved and vitiated as we, where the affections are at such open and constant war with the judgment, and passion and present interest overpower the better and more judicious dictates of the mind; what will it avail to proselyte the intellect, so long as no spell can be found to charm the heart, to secure the assent of the rational part of our nature, whilst the moral portion of our constitution escapes from its conclusions, and remains entrenched in its own worldliness and depravity? Let the perceptions of the understanding be ever so distinct and full, so long as the heart continues in alliance with sin, it will still follow its predominant bias, and perpetually slide away from the controul and guidance of reason.

In order, therefore, to produce uniform, trusty, and unreserved obedience, something more is needful than merely to demonstrate its obligation and reasonableness, its propriety and excellence. The decisions of the judgment must be fortified by the affectious of the heart; the soul must be leagued in alliance with the law, and the man fast bound to his duty by the strong and indissoluble bands of delighted and ardent attachment. From the mo-

ment that the love of duty is implanted in the soul, you may depend upon the warmth and vigour, the sincerity and constancy of his obedience. The performance of the will of God then becomes his regular employment, and his dearest occupation. The law of God is then written on his heart, and it is his meat and his drink to do the will of his heavenly Father. For, when once you win the affections of a man, you gain the master principle of his nature, and secure the undivided dominion of his soul. When the best and strongest powers of his mind are in complete accordance with your wishes, he can no longer meditate opposition to your will, nor entertain the slightest disposition to defeat or evade the execution of your pleasure. His tastes and inclinations coinciding with your own, he will naturally and spontaneously do what is most agreeable to your desires, and whatever he does will be done with alacrity and cheerfulness, with diligence and with delight.

If this reasoning be correct; if the presence of love be allowed to be necessary for the performance of genuine and acceptable obedience: then, the importance and value of the principles of the evangelical system must be immediately recognised; for nowhere have we such an affecting and overpowering discovery of the love of God as in redemption, and by none is this endearing display of divine benignity so fully and impressively apprehended as by the stedfast adherents of the gospel.

We indeed most frankly and gladly admit, that even on the hypothesis of our opponents, upon the principles of legality and natural religion, we are bound to love God and serve him. By the very constitution of our nature, we are laid under strong and indefeasible obligations to comply with every intimation of his will, and devote ourselves cordially, unreservedly and for ever, to the performance of whatever he prescribes. His claims upon our homage and regard are confirmed by all his works and dispensations. Every view that we can take of the perfections of his nature, of the relation to him in which we stand, and the unceasing communications of his kindness, most amply establishes the fact, that we are not our own, and that we are eternally bound to honour and obey him. We owe him a large return of gratitude and devotion for the blessings of creation and the gifts of providence. All that we have and all that we are, proceed entirely from his own bounty, and are the fruits of his rich inexhaustible liberality and love. And whilst they all proceed from his own munificence, who can recount the number, or express the value of the varied, the precious, and inestimable benefits which we enjoy? To what quarter can we turn without meeting with the most stupendous, and magnificent marks of his benignity? He has conferred on us the most noble and useful faculties and powers; he has placed us in a world stored with his riches, and adorned with the most brilliant

traces of his wisdom and his might; he has clothed every scene with loveliness, and made every sense the inlet of delight and gladness. For each of these displays of his goodness we have cause of deep and ardent attachment to his service; and whilst expatiating amidst the exuberance of his unwearyed beneficence, if our minds were properly constituted, for all these expressions of his favour, we would constantly cultivate a thankful disposition, and by the purity of our hearts, and the holiness and usefulness of our lives, we every day would attest our fervent adoring gratitude, and proclaim his merited and his matchless praise.

But however manifold and great the manifestations of his goodness in the works of creation, and in the dispensations of providence, they have no glory, by reason of a glory that excelleth. All their majesty and worth, all their loveliness and grandeur, are completely surpassed and eclipsed by that mercy of mercies, in which all our hopes are founded, and from which all our present and everlasting consolations and blessings flow, the gift of his Son. It is here where he has arrayed himself in the most amiable and attractive attributes of Divinity; it is here where he has given full scope to the exercise of his compassion and generosity, and has shown to angels, principalities, and powers, what wonders of grace and tenderness, a God of almighty strength and boundless benevolence can perform. Had he flung us for ever from his pre-

sence, and closed on us the gates of everlasting despair and misery; had he placed us under the weight of his indignation, and left us through a dark and a dreary eternity to deplore the direful effects of our own infatuation and guilt, at the very worst, we should have received no more than what our crimes righteously deserved, and his justice would have reaped one of its fairest, though most awful, triumphs from our terrible and never-ending misery.

To make us then the objects of pity; to deliver creatures so mean, and sinners so vile and wretched as we, from all this unknown and unutterable wretchedness and horror; to redeem us by the sufferings and sacrifice of his own Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, is the very sublime of mercy, and carries divine condescension and love to their very height and consummation. More than this the mind cannot conceive, nor could the Deity have employed, to illustrate the benignity of his nature, and express the strength and ardour of that concern which he entertained for the children of men. Who can contemplate this transcendant display of his goodness without emotions of the most elevated admiration, and a glow of the most lively and transporting joy and ecstacy? Unless he possess the heart of an infernal, is it possible for a man to take a survey of the various incidents in this marvellous transaction, and reflect on the countless and the infinite obliga-

tions which we owe to this generous Friend of sinners, to this almighty and compassionate Redeemer of our ruined race, without feeling that he is not his own, that he is bought with a price, and bound to glorify God in his soul, body, and spirit, which are the Lord's?

But, if the consideration of this astonishing, this unequalled event, be admitted to possess any tendency at all, to infuse a principle of affection and gratitude into the heart of the believer, and of activity and zeal into his performances; if it be admitted that the maxim of inspiration is founded in truth, and possessed of any practical utility and force, "we love him because he first loved us," it certainly cannot require any very tedious nor laboured argument to prove, that the moral conduct of that man, whose belief is founded on the salvation of the gospel, and who embraces it in all its extent and latitude, must possess a prodigious and immeasurable superiority over the religious and virtuous services of the man, who is perpetually labouring to contract its vast and boundless dimensions, and who takes up his rest in the tenets of a lower and colder creed. If it require no argument to prove that the whole is larger than a part, or that a multiple is greater than its multiplier; then, when the blessings of redemption, in number and in value, just as far exceed the importance and the worth of the blessings of creation and the bounties of providence, as the height of the pole surpasses

the stature of a tulip, or the size of the globe transcends the bulk of an atom, can any lengthened or ingenious process be requisite to demonstrate that the man, who, along with all the sense of gratitude which, in common with the pupils of reason and the votaries of legality, he owes for the mercies of creation, and the blessings of a liberal and ever watchful providence, who, without overlooking one instance of these acts of divine beneficence, or in the slightest degree detracting from their worth, clearly and distinctly retains the whole, and heartily and thankfully acknowledges the great and the inexpressible value of them all, and adds to their vast amount the immense, the infinite obligations which he derives from redemption, will be bound by ties still more numerous and strong, to love, honour, serve, and obey the Lord his God ? If he, to whom much is forgiven, loveth much, and he, to whom little is forgiven, loveth little; can that man, who imagines that he can in part contribute to his own justification, who, instead of cordially embracing the righteousness of the Saviour, and making it, not merely his main, but his only and his delighted plea, employs it as subsidiary to his own exertions, and dreams of dividing the merit of his salvation with Immanuel, have the same elevated and adoring admiration of redeeming mercy, and the same devout and enraptured attachment to the Redeemer, with the man who feels himself indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ entirely,

who relies on him wholly, and glories in him alone?

If, therefore, love to the Lord Jesus Christ be allowed to have any influence at all upon our obedience, we certainly are abundantly warranted to maintain, that the man who has the most distinct and impressive views of this matchless manifestation of mercy, must also have the most lively and fervent attachment to the Redeemer, and that he, whose affection to the Son of God is most strong and intense, must likewise be the most consistent, cheerful and active, in fulfilling every duty which the Lord has enjoined; and, since the believer has incomparably the clearest and the fullest convictions of the extent and grandeur of this dispensation of grace, and is most powerfully penetrated with a sense of the returns which he owes to his Redeemer, he surely must be unspeakably more steadfast, active, earnest and indefatigable, than the legalist, in every work of faith and in every labour of love.

If this conclusion be granted, it is no doubt a great point gained, and a position which appears to be fairly and honourably won. This, however, is very far from being all the advantage which the advocates of a free salvation can claim. It would be unjust to the noble cause which I plead, unjust to the wisdom and kindness of our Redeemer and Lord, unjust to the interests of religion and of righteousness, to dismiss the subject, without en-

deavouring to carry the reader farther, and, in order to show him the strength and excellence of the evangelical system, and the moral emptiness and inefficiency of its rival, attempting to convince him, that, without love to God and to the duties which we discharge, we cannot be possessed of any real religion or virtue at all.

It is not the doing of what is just and honourable in itself, nor even of what is expressly appointed by the authority of God, which constitutes an action good, and entitles the agent to approbation and praise. It is only when the heart is linked to what is right, and when we sincerely and deliberately design to do what is equitable, and agreeable to the will of God, that we can lawfully claim the praise of goodness, and the commendation of having done our duty. It is the intention which stamps the nature of our characters, and from which all our actions take their qualities; so that there is just as much worth, and not a particle more, in any virtuous deed which we perform, as there is affection in our hearts to the pious or benevolent work which we fulfil. If the heart be right, if the man be supremely and ardently enamoured of what is pure, holy, and beneficent, he deserves the name of good, though, from the unfortunate circumstances in which he is placed, he never should have the opportunity of publicly accomplishing one generous or laudable service; but, if the heart be naughty, that is, if the man be in love with vice, he

merits the name of wicked, even though his whole life, so far as the eye of the world can reach, were spent in upright and benevolent exercises, and covered all over with the cloak of religious sanctity. If, while he is purposing and aiming at mischief, through mistake or accident he should do something that is peculiarly desirable and beneficial; if, while the bent of his soul is designedly and strongly set upon evil, from a love of fame, from a fear of punishment, or any other mean and sinister motive, his conduct should prove uncommonly correct and useful, still his virtuous labours, however numerous and splendid, are totally destitute of every particle of sound and genuine worth. A hireling, at the very time that he entertains an antipathy against the poor, and would gladly, if he durst, aggravate their sufferings, may be very serviceable to the destitute, by carrying round to them, at his master's command, a supply of money or provisions: but is his charity, if that sacred name may be prostituted to denote the unwilling and sulky execution of the kind injunctions of another, of the same description with the benevolence of his master, who, prompted by the purest principles of generosity, dives into the abodes of want and wretchedness, listens to the tale of disappointment and sorrow, and, with all the liberality which compassion can inspire, and all the tenderness of the most endearing sensibility, ministers to the relief of the indigent and mourning?

But, if the reluctant instrument of another's bounty be no object of esteem, can that man himself, who, without any real love to duty, but merely from mercenary and unworthy motives, is punctual and exemplary in its performance, be more fairly and honourably entitled to the praise or the rewards of moral worth and excellence? An organ may be useful in pitching the tune, and in regulating the voices of the congregation; but, while utterly incapable of any intelligent or studied affection for the work in which it is employed, however true or touching its tones, who would presume to affirm that it is either grateful or devout? And, let a man be ever so decent and respectable in his deportment, let his deeds of sympathy or munificence, be ever so multiplied and magnificent; still, if he is not in love with the duties which he fulfils, and the upright practices which he pursues, if he does not sincerely, explicitly, and from the heart, intend and desire the promotion of the cause of religion and of righteousness, in the sight of God and of every candid and enlightened judge of moral conduct, what better or more valuable are his most showy and expensive services than if they had been performed by a machine? To society they may be of the greatest profit, but they are not of the smallest benefit to the agent himself.

The number and the magnitude of his virtuous achievements cannot, in the smallest degree, affect their intrinsic quality. The want of an inward

love of goodness, and of an honest design to do what is commanded by God, forms a radical and irreparable defect in his proceedings which vitiates the whole of his deeds, and which no subsequent exertions, however vigorous and persevering, can rectify, and for which they never can atone. Though a series of ciphers should be extended to infinity, still so long as it does not contain a single unit, the whole sum is totally destitute of the smallest value. If each separate particle of corporeal substance be without thought and sensation, though it should be ever so nicely arranged and compounded, collected from every quarter, and piled up to immensity, what could be the product of the whole of this laborious accumulation, but one enormous mass of unfeeling unintelligent matter? And, if none of the duties which we discharge are done in love, done simply and purely because they are right, and agreeable to the will of God; let them be ever so numerous and various, let them be ever so diligently and perseveringly plied, let them be prosecuted with the most strenuous activity and imposing success, to what could the whole mighty assemblage amount, but to one huge heap of barren, empty, and unprofitable formalities?

Now, if it be not the bare performance of what is right that renders us good, but the doing of it from love to God, and delight in the duties which he has prescribed; then, it necessarily follows that the legal and self-righteous, amidst all their high claims

to the possession of rectitude, have, in fact, no just and well founded title to the praise of any moral goodness whatever. This assertion may be regarded as harsh and uncandid, but it is not stronger than reason warrants, and it is therefore most earnestly recommended to the serious attention of all those to whom it applies. They may be unwearied in going through the round of outward duty, and may be eminent for many branches of social virtue ; they may be possessed of great personal probity, and prove highly beneficial to the public ; from long custom a moral life may have become easy and habitual, and from the regularity and readiness with which they fall into the services which they render, they may fancy that they are really in love with the practices which they pursue.

But why do they embark in these duties, and so uniformly and steadily fulfil them ? Is it from delight in their nature, or attachment to that God who has enjoined them ? Is it because these duties are so just, reasonable, excellent, and amiable, that they cannot possibly forbear them ? or, is it because their gratitude and affection to the Most High are so profound and overcoming, that they cannot withhold themselves from his service ; but won by his kindness, and captivated by his infinite and engaging perfections, they are irresistibly constrained to spend and be spent in his sacred and delightful employment ? Any of these

amiable and hallowed springs of action, would render their conduct a proper object of commendation ; but nothing can be farther from their hearts than the presence and influence of these noble and laudable principles. When the secret comes out, it is found that their attachment to duty arises from no worth nor excellence which holiness itself possesses, nor from any love or gratitude to God for the blessings which they have already received ; but merely, according to the terms of their own creed, from the mean and mercenary purpose of recommending themselves by their performances to the favour of their Judge. They love obedience to his law, exactly as a hireling loves work, in order that he may establish a right to his wages ; or as a patient loves an unpalatable prescription, in order that he may recover his health. And if the hireling would renounce his labour, if he were sure of receiving his reward by easier means ; and if the patient would abandon his nauseous draughts, if he were certain of obtaining the removal of his malady by more mild and agreeable measures ; when the legal and self-righteous are devoted to duty merely from the selfish hope of an ample remuneration for their paltry and despicable performances, demolish the foundations of this sordid expectation, and what hold could you in future have of their steady and vigorous pursuit of virtue ? Having no root of goodness in themselves, having nothing to bind

their affections in close and indissoluble attachment to the Lord, whenever this adventitious stimulus is removed, all the fair and goodly array of their duties and virtues will vanish, and their zeal and ardour in the cause of religion and morality will expire. Extinguish the hope of heaven, and the fear of hell; tell them that their best and most persevering efforts never can achieve the mighty task which they have undertaken; convince them that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God, and from that day and downward you may bid farewell to all their shewy exertions, for not one motive would remain to animate them to the cultivation of godliness, and the practice of good works.

And if this be all the security which we enjoy for the stability and permanence of their pious and beneficent labours, let them be ever so seemly and imposing, what is the real worth and significance of the whole? The mercenary quality of their motives brings a cloud of suspicion and disgrace upon all their services, and strips the most amiable and useful of their labours, of all their loveliness and value. Their best and purest services are not the result of a deliberate and chosen love of rectitude, but the effect of fear or hope, of accident or necessity. And if there is nothing commendable in the deed any father than it is the fruit of an upright and honest desire to do what is for the glory of God,

and the good of man; since this is a-wanting in the services of the self-righteous and the legal, what better title can they advance to the praise of moral worth, than what might be claimed for the warmth of a vernal sun, or the refreshment imparted by a summer shower?

But with the base, mercenary, stiff, contracted fugitive, and heartless performances of the legal and self-righteous, in order to perceive the prodigious and lovely superiority of evangelical motives, contrast the purity, the cordiality, the entireness, steadiness, and intensity of a believer's obedience.

In order to be acceptable, and render it a just object of esteem, is it necessary that our virtue should be pure, and proceed solely from a love of goodness? When the leading and fundamental article in the creed of a Christian is, that by grace he is saved, how is it possible that the purity of his obedience can be mixed or debased by any mean or vile alloy? Owing the whole of his enjoyments in time and through eternity, to the generosity and grace of the Redeemer, and disclaiming all reliance upon the worth and efficacy of his own exertions, what selfish, secular, ignoble, or sordid ingredient can be suspected of entering into the composition of his services? To what can his activity and ardour in duty be ascribed, but to his fixed, deliberate, and determined attachment to righteousness, or his strong

and overpowering love and gratitude to God? And what better or purer principles can characterise the obedience of mortals, or ennoble the performances of angels? When God is light; when God is love; when he is the Father of glory, and the Perfection of beauty; when into his infinite nature he has concentrated every attribute of excellence and loveliness, what is the pure and ardent love of God, but the pure and ardent love of supreme, absolute, unchanging, eternal goodness? When in his word he represents the supreme love of himself, as the very crown and consummation of all created virtue, when he tells us that we are not our own, that we are bought with a price, and upon this purchase grafts an exhortation to glorify him in our soul, body, and spirit, which are his; when he commands us to love him with all our heart and soul, and strength and mind, can any principles be more estimable in themselves, or more acceptable in his sight, than intense and tender love and gratitude to himself? Such language proves that love is the fulfilling of the law, and that the love of God and the love of duty are the same.

The affections of love and gratitude appear to contain the very sublime of virtue, and something that looks altogether heavenly and divine. They raise the creature to the nearest possible resemblance, that we can conceive, to the purity and perfection of the infinite and all-glorious Creator. Je-

hovah is good, and does good, not because interest bribes, or necessity compels him, but because he loves righteousness, delights in beneficence, and feels a keen, instinctive, invincible abhorrence of all that is evil. And when the Christian from his heart disclaims all dependence upon his own efforts, and relies for salvation entirely upon the righteousness and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, unless he were sincerely and zealously attached to goodness for its own beauty and excellence, or powerfully and irresistibly animated by love and gratitude to the Father of mercies, and the God of peace, why does he so affectionately and earnestly cultivate every pure and heavenly disposition, and so faithfully and strenuously fulfil every religious and moral obligation? Is it possible for a mortal to give a more unequivocal pledge, than this man, of the integrity of his principles, or to manifest virtue of a quality more divine?

If there be pure and disinterested virtue on earth, it is seated in the heart of that man, who, embarked amidst the storms and the trials of life, assailed by the jarring and distracting competitions of passions and temptation, and struggling with all the depressing and deadening influence of remaining depravity and weakness, bravely surmounts the force and violence of the whole; who, without the dread of future vengeance, or the sordid hope of a recompence for his labours, but

solely from love to God, and delight in his service, from affection and gratitude to his Divine and adorable Redeemer, and a desire to advance his honour and his interest, is supremely and unalterably devoted to every duty of religion and morality; and who, through all the difficulties, opposition, and dangers which frown around him, takes his clear and steady way to the regions of light and of purity.

Granting, therefore, that his virtues should be fewer than those of his brethren, which in fact is very far, as we shall afterwards see, from being the case, the simplicity and uncorruptness of his motives, stamp a worth and a value on the least service which he renders, which completely surpasses the most gaudy and expensive deeds which the men of the world can perform.

Is it necessary that our obedience, in order to be acceptable and praiseworthy, should not only be disinterested and pure, but also affectionate and cheerful? These, likewise, are qualities which the duties of the believer possess in perfection, for every thing that he does is the effect of his own free and spontaneous choice, and the result of his gratitude and love to his Saviour and Lord.

Redeemed by the blood of Christ, and sealed by the Spirit of promise, called into the fellowship of the gospel, and the hope of boundless and never-ending glory, he regards himself as not his own, but as the sole property of the Lord, and

bound to consecrate to his service, and employ in his praise, all that he is and all that he possesses. He knows that if he had been left in the hands of justice, everlasting and intolerable misery must have been his portion. From this he was utterly unable to extricate himself, and no friend, in any quarter of the creation, could have afforded him the smallest relief. But from all this he has been rescued by the sufferings and death of Immanuel. And if we have been saved by his blood, what an immense return of gratitude and love must we owe him! Is it natural for us to love those who love us, and have shown us any signal and costly mark of their favour? Shall a slight addition to our worldly comforts, through the bounty of a wealthy and liberal friend, or the preservation of our lives by the resolute and perilous interference of a humane and heroic protector, lead us to venerate his person, and labour, by every respectful attention and affectionate service, to attest our own gratitude and requite his endearing kindness? And is it possible that the vast and boundless philanthropy of the Lord Jesus Christ, who not only exposed his life to danger, but actually surrendered it for our redemption, and surrendered it too in circumstances of unequalled ignominy and pain, who laid it down to secure no limited nor temporary benefit, but to deliver us from absolute wretchedness, and from unknown and endless woe, and invest us in the possession of blessings more

numerous than the stars, and as lasting as eternity, can lay us under less forcible and commanding obligations to love, serve, honour and obey him? If our labours correspond to the amount of his claims, what a great, what an infinite return must we render him, when to him we are indebted not only for life and reason, for health and relatives, but for the safety of our souls, for our immortal all, and for every thing that can make immortality a blessing!

The impression produced upon every mind that really knows his grace, must be just as much more powerful, permanent and affecting, as his majesty is higher than the most exalted in creation, and the effects of his compassion and generosity exceed in magnitude and duration the communications of the most munificent of the sons of men; and since the dignity of his person as far transcends the grandeur of the noblest within the dominions of the Deity, and the value of his gifts as far excels the worth of the best and most esteemed earthly enjoyment, as eternity exceeds the period of threescore and ten, or the expanse of immensity surpasses the dimensions of a mole-hill, the Christian who has any genuine love to the Redeemer at all, must love him above all things, prefer him to his chief joy, and count every thing but loss for his sake. Love to Jesus will carry him completely away; it will swallow up every discordant interest, every inferior con-

diseration, and every conflicting claim; and give to his obedience a strength and a firmness, an elevation and an energy, an unction and a tenderness altogether beyond the comprehension of meaner minds, and for which no match can be found within the frigid regions of legality or the boasted resources of reason and philosophy. All their productions partake of the littleness and imbecility of their puny authors. Redemption is the work of God, and over the whole he has spread a portion of his own liberality and grandeur; and wherever this dispensation is felt and known, the practical results will bear some correspondence to the majesty and immensity of its Great Original.

The obedience of the believer may be defective, for he has not yet attained, neither is he already perfect; but cold, stiff, formal or artificial it cannot be; for his heart is touched, and his affections are thrown into every labour which he undertakes and every service which he performs. From the day that he knows the full amount of the inestimable, the overwhelming obligations which he owes his divine and adorable Redeemer, even though he were left at liberty, he would find it utterly impossible to keep back his heart from God. The love of Christ constrains him; the exalted and realizing discoveries which he obtains of the glories of Immanuel's person, and the deep and penetrating views which he acquires of the infinite

value and eternal duration of the blessings which he derives from his mysterious and affecting death, with a strength and energy, more resistless than fate, urge him on to every holy deed and to every beneficent enterprise. He is stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, not because he is driven to it as a task, and compelled by terror to keep within the narrow confines of duty, and trudge with reluctant and weary steps through its galling, irksome and endless rounds, but because he loves it, delights in it, and cannot let it alone. Supreme and ardent love to Jesus ruling in his heart, it is his meat and his drink to fulfil the will of God, and to finish the work given him to do. His liberal soul devises liberal things. Duty becomes his favourite employment, his constant occupation, the source of his highest and purest joy, and he never is in his element but when engaged in works of faith and in labours of kindness and utility.

Is it necessary that our obedience should be entire and without reserve? If the preceding observations are founded in truth, then we may rest assured that these are qualities by which the performances of the Christian will be signally distinguished. For if to him redemption be all in all, and love to God rule supremely and strongly in his heart, how is it possible for him to withhold any service which he is required or bound to render?

Without this principle you may go far to reform or embellish the character; you may produce occasional fits and starts of piety and of good conduct: but without it you cannot establish any settled permanent principle of entire unqualified universal holiness. By other means you may nibble at iniquity, repress the violence of single passions, or curb the prevalence of particular crimes; by local and temporary expedients you may succeed in giving a currency to a few moral truths, and a popularity and eclat to a few solitary virtues: but so long as the heart is not warmed and filled with love to God, and actuated by a supreme and ardent devotion to duty, every effort to meliorate and purify the stubborn and sterile soil of the human soul, is like attempting to change the nature of the corrupt stock by paring pruning and dressing the twigs and leaves, while the root and trunk are left untouched. In a frost, by means of a fire, you may melt the ice, and throw a comfortable heat over a circumference of a few fathoms; but without a change on the atmosphere, what kindly warmth could you impart to a kingdom or a continent, though you were to multiply your fires by thousands, and give to each the strength and intensity of a volcano? In the most untoward years you may force a few plants, and by extraordinary care and pains you may extort a crop from a few detached patches: but without the nourishing powers of a mild and

genial season, by what exertions, within the reach of mortal strength, could you clothe every field with fragrance and beauty, and make every land laugh with abundance? And though by reason and argument you may convince a man of his duty and interest; though you may persuade him occasionally to deny his favourite habits, and embark in the exercises which he dislikes, till once his heart is made right with God, and the uncontrolled and predominant love of righteousness shed abroad in his soul, on what ground can you ever expect to inspire him with a firm unreserved unyielding submission to every intimation of the Divine will?

But if the liquefying effects of thaw are irresistible, and speedily annihilate the rigours of winter's rugged dominion; if the fertilizing influence of rain and sunshine clothe the pastures with flocks, and cover over the vallies with corn, when once the mind is brought under the force of supreme and fervent love to the Lord, how is it possible that the man can withstand its purifying and sanctifying power? This lays the ax to the root of corruption, and accomplishes its destruction in a mass and at once. Whenever affection and gratitude to an infinite and all-sufficient God, for the unsearchable, the inconceivable riches of his grace, take full possession of the soul, and the heart is wholly enamoured of his goodness and glory, the man has no leisure nor inclination to

pick and choose amongst the Divine precepts, nor any desire nor hankering after things forbidden. The absolute subjugation of his soul expels every disposition to resist the authority of Him whom he supremely loves, and lays its sweetly constraining energy on every principle and faculty of his nature. His obedience is not regulated and measured by the narrow and contracted standard of his own supposed interests, nor the taste and the humour of a blinded and ungodly world, but by the length and the breadth of the Divine law, and the amount of that affection and gratitude which he owes the God of grace. And as that law is all alike holy, just, and good, and his obligations are without number and without degree, his obedience also is without limitation or restraint, and as far above partiality as it is beyond hypocrisy.

Loving God supremely, and devoted to him sincerely and fervently, he esteems all his commandments concerning all things to be right. There is no practice enjoined, within the whole compass of the sacred code, but what he regards with delight, and what, so far from endeavouring to evade, he takes every opportunity, I would not say to perform, but to enjoy. For when once the heart is thus made right with God, duty changes both its nature and its name. It is no longer a burden and a drudgery, but an honour and a privilege; and the Christian would sooner

relinquish his best and dearest earthly comforts, than forego the pure pleasure, and the sublime and inexpressible satisfaction to be found in the work of his Saviour, and in the service of his God.

Has he an opportunity for retiring and pouring out his soul in secret supplication? "He flies to the throne of grace with an irresistible ardour, and an avidity which nothing can satiate." Does the Sabbath call him to an holy abstraction from the world, and the gates of the sanctuary open to invite him to a more close and sensible approach to his Creator? He hails with ecstacy the return of the day of rest, and enters with gladness into the courts of the Lord, to inquire in his temple, and there to hold high and blissful communion with him whom he loves. Has he been ungratefully and injuriously treated, and would naughty nature dictate the infliction of a base and malevolent revenge? He suppresses every indignant and rancorous emotion; and, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven him, he also learns to do the same. Is he called to the exercise of liberality? Remembering the grace of Him, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich, he cheerfully gives alms of such things as he possesses, and whatever he bestows, he gives, not grudgingly, but with good will, and with a ready mind. Has he the means of conveying domestic instruction, or of promoting the

general improvement and happiness of mankind? Whatever may be his talents or his station, he embraces every advantage which his situation affords for advancing the edification, and securing the temporal and eternal welfare of all around him. He holds forth the word of life, and makes his light shine before men, that they, seeing his good works, may glorify his Father, who is in heaven.

In short, if we were to take a survey of the whole range of moral obligation, or examine in detail the separate branches of christian duty, we should find that the believer performs all things that are commanded him, and that whatever he does, he does in love, and heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men. Wherever he goes, and in whatever he is employed, he cannot, for one moment, forget the declarations of his Master, “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and again, ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” With these words perpetually ringing in his ears, the natural and spontaneous language of his soul is, “Blessed Jesus! is this the love of thee, that I keep thy commandments, and do those things which thou hast said? And hast thou loved me, and given thyself for me? Then here am I; do with me what seemeth good in thy sight. Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth. Let me pass through fire, or through water; let my worldly affairs flourish or fade; give me health and liberty, or lay bands on

my loins, and cause men ride over my head; raise me to honour and invest me with affluence, or reduce me to indigence and clothe me with ignominy; let my work be honourable and easy, or accompanied with toil, reproach and danger: none of these things move me; let thy will be done; only let thy name be magnified in me and by me, whether that shall be by life or by death: for I am determined to know nothing but thee, and to glory in nothing save thy cross."

Is it necessary that our obedience should be uniform and steady? The obedience of the believer is fixed on a stable basis, and eminent for its constancy and firmness.

What is forced or assumed will be worn with difficulty, easily suppressed, and gladly laid aside; but what is habitual and natural cannot be so readily repressed, nor controlled with such facility. Amidst every effort to restrain or subdue it, it will still retain its activity, and, upon the removal of the temporary check, exert its energy to recover its former ascendancy and power.

The obedience, accordingly, of the self-righteous, of the men of worldly principles and of worldly probity, who are strangers to a paramount regard to duty, and actuated merely by selfish and mercenary considerations, may be unsettled and desultory, and indicate a spirit that is very far from being in accordance with its services, and very anxious to get rid of its restraints. Their virtue

may prove very fluctuating and evanescent, and their progress, at every step, be encumbered with impediments, and retarded by a thousand disturbing causes.

But can this be the case with that man in whose heart the love of God presides, and who prefers him to his chief joy? whose affections are all in alliance with religion, and whose soul is engaged and interested in its duties? who is in love with the Saviour, and the master passion of whose spirit is a desire, in all things, to please him, and promote his honour and his praise? who is ravished with his goodness, and on whom he has centered every faculty and power which he possesses? Can such a man, who regards his favour as life, and his loving-kindness as better than life; can such a man, who loves him with his whole heart and soul, and who can sincerely and firmly say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," relinquish the sublime and delightful work of the Lord, to return to the galling and disgraceful drudgery of the world and Satan? Will an affectionate mother abandon her own offspring, and lavish on a stranger the kindness and caresses due to her infant son or her only child? Will a hero, who views cowardice with abhorrence, act a pusillanimous and dastardly part? And, whilst the christian is vehemently and supremely enamoured of the condescension and generosity of the Saviour, is it possible to se-

duce him from the allegiance which he owes him, or give the world, and vanity, and sin, that place in his affections which is dedicated to the Redeemer, and occupied by him alone? Such an event will be possible then, and then only, when you can supply him with blessings more numerous and precious than those which the gospel contains; when you can furnish him with a heaven more beatific and splendid than the habitation of the Most High; when you can provide him with an inheritance more durable than eternity; or procure him a benefactor more mighty and munificent than the Illustrious Sufferer of Calvary. Then, but not till then, will he entertain a thought of deserting the cause of his God, and of withdrawing his homage from Him to whom he has yielded himself entirely, and to whom alone he lives. Till then, we may depend upon his being stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Stability is very far from expressing the real nature of his devotion to the will of God. He is not only rooted, and grounded, and settled in the love and obedience of the truth, but his habits of holy activity and diligence are continually on the increase. His obligations being infinite, and his sense of their extent and magnitude perpetually present to his thoughts, his love and attachment, so far from languishing and declining, are incessantly gathering fresh force and vigour. If he love the

Saviour fervently, and serve him carefully to-day, he loves him still more strongly, and serves him with still greater alacrity and earnestness to-morrow. The farther that he advances in the christian career, and the nearer that he draws to the world of light and bliss, the more he discovers of the glory, and the more he experiences of the liberality and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his reverence, admiration, esteem, and attachment to his person acquire a proportional addition of strength and intensity. His path accordingly is as the shining light. He holds on his way, and waxes stronger and stronger. His love, and zeal, and humility grow exceedingly, and having received, and heard how he ought to walk and please God, he abounds therein more and more.

Is it necessary that our obedience should be active and vigorous? I must once more observe, that the believer's is also earnest and intense.

The obedience of the self-righteous, the men of worldly principles and probity, may be stiff and artificial, cold and formal. Their heart is not in their work, and their exertions are regulated by their present or future interests. But the man in whose heart the love of God predominates, who is overpowered and transported with the greatness of redeeming mercy, can withhold nothing from him to whom he owes his all, and whom he loves with his whole soul, and strength, and mind.

He not only does whatsoever the Lord has enjoined, but whatsoever he does is done with a promptitude and alacrity, with a warmth and unction, with a decision and a vigour, which proves that he is entirely embarked in the service of the Saviour, and that he prefers it to his chief joy. He counts no labour too hard, nor any suffering too severe to attest his affection and gratitude to Him who, almighty and glorious as he was, loved him, and gave himself for him. Much having been forgiven him, he loves much. He is wholly engrossed with the obligations which he owes the God of grace; and in the midst of hardships, and in the face of death he feels what the apostles experienced when they said, We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. He finds a principle within him akin to the Spirit which actuated Jeremiah when he declared, that "The word of the Lord was in him as a burning fire shut up in his bowels; and he was weary with forbearing, and he could not stay." You may just as soon hide the light at the blaze of noon, or lay the rising tide, as restrain or extinguish the holy zeal and heavenly ardour of a soul, that is thoroughly penetrated and animated with gratitude and love for the great, the infinite blessings of redeeming mercy.

This subjugation of the heart to the love and the authority of God carries every faculty and power in willing and delightful captivity to his

service. At a funeral, the hireling mourners may find it difficult to maintain the semblance of sorrow, or even to preserve a sedate and grave demeanour: the distant relations too, and general acquaintances of the deceased may walk forward in the procession with an air of ease and indifference: but the loving son, who has lost the parent on whom he doated; the tender husband, who is conveying to their last abode the remains of what to him was best and dearest in creation, has no occasion to tax his natural sprightliness in order to compose his features into the artificial aspect of distress, nor to borrow assistance from ideal scenes of distress to prompt the appearance of sadness. He is touched at heart, and every look and every movement betray a soul sinking under the burden of its griefs, and impatient to get rid of the gaze of strangers, to give free vent in secret to the fulness of its sorrows. The religious professor who regulates his conduct by the dictates of honour, or the calculations of expediency, by a reference to the opinions of men, or a dread of future punishment, will find it hard indeed to preserve a steady and consistent regard to the maxims of reason and the rules of duty; his passions will be perpetually rebelling against his conscience, and struggling to break loose from the restraint and discipline under which he would wish to place them; any occasional ardour that he may manifest will soon languish, and his zeal and vigour

abate; his virtue will prove very contracted and formal, and his exertions very feeble and inefficient. But is it possible that this can be the case with that man whose affections are all in alliance with religion; whose heart is engaged and interested in its duties; who is completely captivated with the Saviour's love, and the ruling and master principle of whose spirit is a desire, in all things, to do his will, and promote his praise?

Such a man is utterly unable to repress the strong irresistible ardour of his devout and holy feelings. Reverence, admiration, love, and gratitude to his Divine and adorable Master, lay all opposition prostrate before them, and urge him uncontrollably on in his sacred and ennobling employment. For his sake he is willing to spend and be spent in works of faith, and in labours of love. He counts not his life dear to himself, that he may fulfil the trust assigned him, and finish his course with joy. Redeemed by the blood of Christ, and exalted to the sublime and transporting hope of heaven, there are now an elevation and a grandeur in his views, corresponding to the exalted relations into which he is introduced, and the bright prospects which he entertains; and there are at the same time such a spirituality, force, and tenderness in all his actions, as demonstrate that he has been taught of God, and has tasted that the Lord is gracious. Whatever he now does, is done with all the energy of a man

who loves his work, and is in earnest in what he performs. When he reads, it is with all the seriousness and diligence of one who is searching that record of truth and mercy, which was given by the God of grace to conduct us to the enjoyment of boundless and never-ending bliss. When he hears the gospel, it is with all the attention and eagerness of one who is listening to the words of eternal life, and solicitous to know what he must do to be saved. When he prays, it is as with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. When he engages in acts of thanksgiving, his heart coincides with the expressions of his voice, and his very soul ascends with his songs of praise. In the whole of his life and conversation he sets the Lord fully, and strongly, and affectionately before him, and to the utmost of his power, yea, and beyond his power, he strives to hold forth the word of life, and glorify him in his soul, body, and spirit which are his.

Look at the conduct of Paul. From the day that Jesus met him on the road to Damascus, till the memorable hour in which he laid his hoary head on the bloody block, he never was at rest. He was incessantly devising or executing some new plan of piety and beneficence. He knew nothing but Christ. For him to live was Christ. To advance the honour of his name, and extend the influence of his grace, were the objects which lay nearest his heart and engrossed his most lively

and intense solicitude. His attainments in personal holiness, his zeal, his diligence, and success in the salvation of souls, and in the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom have raised him to an eminence far above any of the sons of Adam.

But what was the principle which bound him so firmly to his duty, and carried him forward with such dauntless resolution and unabating energy in his laborious and dangerous career? What was it that exalted him to such a matchless elevation in moral excellence, and spread round his character such an array of majesty and loveliness, that, over all the distance and darkness of intervening ages, the light and the lustre of his example still continue to shine, to stimulate, and guide every succeeding competitor in the Christian race? It was no blind nor perverted attachment to the interests of legality, no presumptuous nor fruitless desire to establish a righteousness of his own, and recommend himself by his own works and worth to the approbation of Heaven. Never was there a human creature from whose mind such thoughts were more abhorrent, and who held such impious notions in more deep and cordial detestation. Never was there a man who more sincerely reprobated the arrogance and pride of human merit, nor any who, through a long life, more affectionately and strenuously contended for salvation by pure and absolute grace. The great principle

which pervaded every feeling of his heart, and ruled with such unrivalled sway over all his powers, was supreme and ardent attachment to the Redeemer. The love of Christ constrained him, and for his sake he counted every thing but loss.

In Paul we have a true specimen of the moral influence of the love of Christ. If not the only, it was at least the predominant principle in his mind. And wherever this love is known with corresponding clearness, and felt with similar force, it will still produce the same effects. It will teach the man to deny himself, to take up his cross, and follow Jesus. It will compel him to abound in the fruits of righteousness, to hold forth the word of life, to be ready unto all good works, and to do whatsoever his hand finds to do with his might.

And whilst these are the natural and the necessary effects of a clear and a full admission into the mind of the doctrines of grace, no philanthropist can implore a more noble and comprehensive blessing to fallen humanity, than the universal knowledge and cordial belief of these invaluable truths : for this would be to plant the church, to fill the state, and people the whole earth with men like Paul.

## SECT. III.

The Gospel establishes the Law by the assistance which it imparts  
for performing the services which it enjoins.

FROM an examination of the natural and inherent tendency of the doctrines of the gospel, we have already seen how directly and powerfully it is calculated to secure the observance of the law.

Before we take leave of the subject, we are bound, in justice to this sacred institution, in justice to its most zealous and enlightened admirers, and in justice to the kindness and love of the God who revealed it, pointedly to call the attention of the reader to the supernatural aid which it has provided to carry into effect the truths which it inculcates.

The Holy Spirit is promised to clothe them with success; and a peculiar efficacy, accordingly, is found to accompany their faithful and affectionate ministration.

In order to illustrate the importance and value of this merciful arrangement, it will be requisite to shew that his blessing is necessary to give effect to moral truth, and that the communication of his blessing is limited to the publication of the doctrines of the gospel.

We must observe:

I. That his blessing is necessary to give effect to moral truth.

We formerly had occasion to remark the great importance of truth, and to take notice of the close and inseparable connexion betwixt the conduct which every man pursues, and the tenets which he holds. It must, however, be as distinctly remembered on the other hand, that no truth can exert any influence whatever till it be understood and embraced. Whilst it is unknown or disbelieved, it can produce no more impression upon the heart and the life, than if it possessed no existence.

In this respect the doctrines of revelation are precisely on a level with other facts. Though admirably adapted to sanctify and purify the sons of men, they do not operate by any inherent and independent efficiency of their own. Before they can accomplish any useful result, they must be understood and credited.

In one respect, indeed, other truths enjoy a great advantage over the doctrines of the gospel. We have no interest to oppose their admission into the mind, nor to divert them from their destined purpose. But the discoveries of revelation are all so holy in their own nature, and so intimately connected with such a train of momentous practical consequences, that we have a multitude of prejudices to withstand their entrance, or, if ever

they gain access at all, to pervert or weaken their authority, that if they were left to make their own way in the world, however simple, plain, and salutary, they would either be rejected in a mass, or rendered totally inert and useless.

If like the truths in nature, we had nothing within us to resist their entrance nor counteract their exercise, they would universally secure the readiest reception, and operate with the utmost steadiness and precision. When a man understands the import of the terms, he is at no loss to tell whether ten thousand or ten constitutes the greater number; and with a sound eye he instantly and inevitably perceives the difference betwixt orange and purple. But if a man have no idea of numbers, he can form no judgment whatever of the proportion of one sum to another; and if his eye be diseased, the perception which he receives will correspond to the nature of the distemper under which he labours. The rays of light, viewed through a coloured glass, possess the tinge of the intervening substance, so that the impression which they communicate, is exactly the same as if they had proceeded from a luminous body of the hue of the medium through which they are transmitted.

Were our tastes and habits in complete accordance with the pure and holy dictates of Christianity, the doctrines of the gospel would obtain the most prompt and cordial welcome, they would rule with unbounded sway, and by their own in-

trinsic energy, would beget the most interesting and delightful moral results. But addressed to creatures so blinded by prejudice, and so miserably enslaved as we to depravity and vice, however skillfully adapted to our condition, and however strongly fitted to command the most salutary and beneficial consequences, if left to their own unaided influence, they would either produce no impression whatever, or one that would be altogether powerless. Entrenched in its own prepossessions, the mind systematically and dexterously repels their approach ; or, if ever they force a lodgment, a thousand passions and vices immediately unite to warp them from their purpose and defeat their gracious design ; and thus the word, though sent down from the throne of mercy, and able to raise us to the heaven of heavens, through the blindness, perversity, and wickedness of man, in so many melancholy and affecting instances becomes utterly unprofitable.

If the efficacy of religious truth depended upon its own inherent virtue; then, wherever it is equally understood and enjoyed, its success would be perfectly uniform and equal; and from the known degree of fidelity and zeal with which it is dispensed, we could as safely and confidently predict its effects, as the position of a planet, or the performance of an engine.

History, however, and observation concur to prove the humbling and the painful fact, that,

where the means are the same, the result is widely different. By the very same privileges, by which some are exalted unto heaven, others are cast down into hell. Of the inhabitants of the same parish, of the worshippers in the same congregation, of the members of the same family, where every external mean is not merely similar, but identically the same, one is taken and another left. At the same ordinance, one is impressed, melted, elevated, and refreshed; and another, in the seat beside him, yawns throughout the whole of the sacred service, and looks around him with an air of the most vacant listlessness, and the most impenetrable insensibility. Under the same sermon, one hears as if he heard not, and another hears as for eternity: on the one the doctrines of salvation fall as rain upon the rock; to the other they come as water to the thirsty, and as floods to the dry ground. And when thus the truths stated are the same, and the manner in which they are enforced is the same, what inference can we draw from the different consequences by which they are followed, but the conclusion which the apostle has drawn before us, so then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase?

The Bible is at all times the same. Its contents never vary: but a very different impression is produced by its truth upon different men, and even upon the same man at different times. One reads

it to feed a foul and festering imagination, or to furnish himself with materials to point his unhallowed jests, and give a zest and seasoning to the insipidity and filth of his daily profanity; and another reads it to be made wise unto salvation, to imbue his heart more thoroughly with its pure principles, to discover more of the marvellous loving-kindness of the Lord, and to bind his soul in more close and lively union with his Saviour. A Voltaire and a Paine peruse it, to hold up its sacred contents to the insult and derision of an unbelieving and ungodly age; a Romaine and an Erskine bend in devout and sublime delight over its holy pages, to maintain high converse with their God, and anticipate the joys and transports of a blessed immortality. To the humble and the faithful, the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; they open the eyes, and make wise the simple: to the worldly and the wicked they are dark and unintelligible mysteries, or if ever any portion of their meaning is discerned, it excites only their disgust and enmity. The Christian delights in the law of God, and meditates on it day and night; he esteems the words of God more than his necessary food, and makes them his song in the house of his pilgrimage: the infidel and reprobate, though with an interest as great and lasting in their reality, detest their discoveries, and with a malign and perverse ingenuity, labour to undermine their authority and counter-

act their renovating and purifying power. The renewed mind embraces with gladness and cleaves with firmness to all their precious truths; the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned. To the one the the doctrines of inspiration are a savour of life unto life, and to the other a savour of death unto death. And thus what was ordained and fitted unto salvation, through the perverseness and corruption of those to whom it is addressed, proves the occasion of condemnation and wrath.

The works of nature are alike open to the contemplation of the believer and the unbeliever, and every where present the same fertile and impressive proofs of creative power and skill. The effect, however, which they produce upon the minds of observers is very dissimilar. Whilst one surveys them all with brute unconscious gaze, another rises from "nature up to nature's God," and finds the flame of grateful ardent devotion, acquiring fresh strength and vigour at every step in his delightful progress. Scenes which elevated the admiration of Newton to rapture, have no influence upon the blunter feelings of the disciples of the French physical school. From a field of observation more extensive and sublime than the telescope ever subjected to the survey of astronomy, so far from being over-powered and softened by the glories of a present Deity every where rising around him, the eye of a

fiend gathers nothing but matter to strengthen his malignity, and send him back, with confirmed resolution and activity, to deeds of evil and of darkness.

These facts seem abundantly to prove that truth does not operate by any inherent or independent energy of its own; that, in order to give it effect, it is not enough that it should be presented to the mind, that its meaning should be explained, its importance stated, and its certainty demonstrated. They intimate that something more must be done; that the attention must be attracted to it, that its nature must be understood, its excellence seen, and its truth believed. The heart must be prepared to embrace it, and the soul itself endowed with a taste to relish and approve it. To create this taste, and secure this preparation, nothing less than divine power is requisite; and to produce them, is the work of the Holy Ghost.

But, whilst we are thus obliged to maintain the inefficacy of moral truth when deprived of the Spirit's aid, every sentence which we have now been uttering, goes directly and powerfully to establish the unspeakable, the infinite importance of evangelical truth: for, if nothing less than the agency of the Holy Ghost can give effect to moral truth, it must be remembered,

**II.** That it is only to evangelical truth that his influences have been promised, and it is only

through this medium that we are warranted to expect them.

To hope for the enjoyment of his assistance through any other means, must be altogether groundless and delusive. After all that the Lord Jesus Christ has done to purchase our redemption, after the care with which, in the pages of inspiration, he has delineated the way of life and peace, after the affecting proof which he has given that, in the salvation of men, he himself is all in all, can any thing be more insulting to his person, or more subversive of the essential distinctions betwixt right and wrong, than to assert or suppose that the same or similar success may be expected to attend the preaching of truth and of error? the doctrines of grace, and the nostrums of legality? the principles of St. Paul, and the ethics of Cicero, Seneca, or Plato? the statements of that system which gives to Jesus the undivided glory of our salvation, or the tenets of that scheme in which he enjoys only a partial sovereignty, and in which self-righteousness is exalted to share his throne? In other cases, do we find that the same results follow from the use of opposite means, and that it is immaterial whether the natural and adequate instrument be employed, or one that has no fitness whatever for the purpose in view? Is a knowledge of the language of ancient Athens just as readily acquired by instructions in German, as by lessons in Greek? Is eminence in Mathematics just as certainly at-

tained, by applying the mind to the principles of botany or music, as by devoting the attention to the elements of geometry? Is skill in the healing art just as speedily and effectually gained by investigating the institutions of law, or the rules of navigation, as by giving up the mind to the business of medicine? And, if we would wish to become wise unto salvation, and arrive at the possession of that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord, pray whether is this most likely to be secured by studying the truth as it is in Jesus, and which the God of heaven has stamped with his signal approbation and blessing, or by betaking ourselves to the speculations and dreams of rash and arrogant men, and which, in every period of their history, have laboured under the withering and blasting rebuke of the Almighty, and which have proved totally abortive? If men may be as readily converted to God, and led to the love and practice of holiness, by the doctrines of natural religion as by the principles of the gospel, for what end has revelation been given, or what purpose can the Lord Jesus Christ serve in the religion of a human creature?

If we are willing to abide by the decisions of the Bible, we shall very soon admit the paramount authority of evangelical doctrine, for it is no small stress which it teaches us to lay upon the truth. There we find that prayer is made for the diffusion of religious knowledge, and the universal preva-

lence of the truth. We are there told that we are begotten through the word of truth, and sanctified through the truth. We are there exhorted to hold fast the form of sound words, to buy the truth and sell it not, and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Departures from the faith are deprecated, and anathemas poured forth against all who pervert the word of God, and corrupt the gospel of Christ.

When such respect is every where paid to the truth, can we, for a moment, imagine that the Holy Ghost will affix the seal and stamp of his sanction to a falsehood, and employ dogmas which he never published nor approved, as the means of savingly uniting the soul to Jesus, and promoting the life and power of godliness? No: he delights in method and regularity, and, with the whole creation at his command, and all the resources of Deity at his disposal, he is pleased to restrain his influences within the limits which he himself has selected, and to pour them out in rich and life-giving effusion, only through the conveyances which he himself has prescribed.

To Omnipotence all things are possible. The Most High has an unlimited choice of instruments, and can as easily accomplish his purposes in one form as in another. If such had been his pleasure, he could as effectually have called the world into being by reversing the words which he pronounced, as by using the language which he actually

uttered. And, if such were his will, he could as easily procure the sanctification of the sons of men, by deep and recondite discussions on virtue or philosophy, as by the plain and affectionate preaching of the pure and unadulterated gospel of peace. But he is the God of order; and, though he can compass ends far beyond the reach of the agency which he uses, still he preserves a correspondence betwixt the instruments which he takes into his service, and the objects which he secures. Creation, accordingly, was brought into being, not by prohibiting its existence, but by the authoritative command to let it be. And conversions are made, and the work of renovation is carried on, not by means of plays, novels, romances, and the other offals of the literary world, nor even by profound and elaborate disquisitions on pneumatology and morals, but by a plain and faithful declaration of the truth as it is in Jesus. In every instance in which a sinner has been turned from the evil and error of his ways, to the wisdom and obedience of the just, whatever may have been the immediate occasion or mean, the grand and powerful instrument is ultimately found to have been truth derived from the word of God; and of all the truths which the Holy Ghost has dignified, as the medium of savingly uniting the soul to the Lord Jesus Christ, and of producing genuine and acceptable obedience, none have been more eminently distinguished and blessed than the doctrines of grace. Those des-

pised and hated truths which enter into the very substance and essence of the gospel, which constitute the life and soul of Christianity, and which prove the foundation of a sinner's hopes, and the source of all his joys, are the weapons which the God of heaven has honoured, to pull down the strong holds of vice and infidelity, which have humbled the pride of imperial Rome, liberated so many of the kingdoms of Europe from the yoke of papal usurpation, and, by sweeping inroads upon the dominions of the prince of darkness, have shaken the reign of pagan abominations; and it is through the instrumentality of these truths, that the religion of peace shall walk abroad into the length and breadth of the earth, subjugate the nations to the faith, and spread the healing virtue of the cross over the whole extent of our wretched and bleeding world. It is by the law which goes forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord which proceeds from Jerusalem, the law of faith, the gospel of peace, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains, exalted above the hills, and that all nations shall flow unto it; that the people shall walk in his paths, and that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

"We preach Christ crucified," said the most successful preacher of righteousness that ever embarked in that momentous and sacred undertaking, "unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the

Greeks foolishness : but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." If the wise and the learned had been assembled in close consultation, to devise the most effectual plan of arresting the career of profligacy and impiety, and of planting in the world the universal love and practice of holiness, they would unanimously have recommended the preaching of the law, warm and eloquent addresses upon the excellence and utility of virtue, the beauty and advantages of a moral life, and the efficacy of good works, to purchase the favour of the Deity, and secure the highest distinctions amongst the blessed : but the proposal of preaching the gospel, of proclaiming through the nations the glad tidings of salvation by grace, they would have heard with alarm, and have exploded with instant and unmeasured indignation, as the infallible way to subvert the foundations of morality, and deluge the earth with anarchy and crimes. But the thoughts of God are not as our thoughts, nor his ways like ours. The very process which they would have scouted, is the method adopted by Omniscience. " For, after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." And, let it not be forgotten, that the very same truths, which are the instrument of the soul's conversion, are also the means of the sinner's sanctification. It is by be-

coming dead to the law, by despairing of justification by works, and by betaking himself to the righteousness of faith, that he lives unto God. “ Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God: for, when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death: but now we are delivered from the law, that being dead in which we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

The promise of the Holy Spirit, to guide, enlighten, and sanctify the people of God, pervades the Old Testament, and is there held up to their expectations and their prayers, as the best and noblest blessing which would distinguish and crown the New Testament dispensation. In circumstances of unequalled solemnity and tenderness, this promise was renewed by our dying Redeemer. But, how is the possession of this invaluable benefit of his presence and agency, to be obtained? By such language as the following the apostle has placed the answer to this question, beyond the shade of suspicion: “ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law; being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might

receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. He, therefore, that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

If there be either meaning in language, or consistency in the apostle's reasoning, there can be no doubt that faith, and the hearing of faith, denote, in the most strict and rigid sense of the terms, the pure doctrines of the gospel, those doctrines which Paul preached with such affection and success, for which he contended with such earnestness and zeal, and for the maintenance of which, in the Christian church, he cheerfully sustained the loss of all that in this world his heart could hold dear. It is to these truths that the promise of the influences of the Holy Spirit is confined, and it is, therefore, only by the cordial reception of them that we are warranted to expect the enjoyment of his blessing.

Now, if it be true, as we have already proved, that his agency is necessary to give effect to moral truth, and if this agency be promised only to the preaching of the gospel, can it admit a moment's doubt whether the legal or the evangelical system bids fairest for success? If no man can hesitate whether light or darkness be most luminous and cheering; if we cannot, for one instant, question

whether a mountain or an atom be most bulky; can it be more uncertain whether human weakness, or almighty strength, be most powerful and efficient? whether the man, who encounters all the difficulties, fatigues, and hazards of duty, in the feebleness of his native imbecility, or he who meets them in the might of Omnipotence, be most likely to bear up against their pressure, and return with honour and with triumph from the trial?

And, if this be a point on which no dubiety can exist, can we be at a greater loss to determine whether his presence and aid may be most reasonably expected in the way in which we have seen that they have been promised and enjoyed, or in the way in which they have uniformly been denied and withheld? Can we as infallibly arrive at a right result by following an erroneous principle, as by employing a correct process? or can we more rationally look for the help of the Holy Spirit, by adhering to the works of the law, when he himself has expressly limited the communication of his assistance to the hearing of faith?

On his own principles, the legalist can neither greatly ask nor expect the succour of the Holy Spirit: for, if he be not compelled to rely entirely on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek salvation solely through grace, it cannot be thought that he regards himself by nature as totally depraved and undone, and utterly without God and without hope. But, so long as he ima-

gines that salvation is, in any degree, the fruit of his own virtuous exertions and religious performances, it is clear that he will, in a greater or less degree, rely for his acceptance in the sight of God upon his own powers and resources. In exact proportion, however, to the confidence which he reposes in these visionary grounds of trust, will he undervalue or despise the aid of the Almighty Spirit. Who will go to school to learn what he fancies that he already knows? Who will part with his most valued property to acquire some inferior article which he believes that he already possesses? And what legalist, who dreams that, by the deeds of the law, he can either, in whole or in part, establish a righteousness of his own, can be supposed to betake himself earnestly and ardently, by supplication and prayer, to the Spirit of grace to renovate his nature, to sanctify him wholly, and to work in him to will and to do what is pleasing unto God?

But on the other hand, look at the believer, the man who, from a discovery of his helplessness and misery, the man who, from a sight of his absolute depravity and ruin, is compelled to repair simply and entirely to the hope set before him. By his complete renunciation of all dependence upon his own works and worth, and by his solicitous and cordial reliance on the merits of Immanuel, this man gives the most unequivocal evidence of his firm conviction that, if nothing less than the grace of

Christ can forgive his offences, nothing less than the power of the Divine Spirit, can subdue his iniquities, purify his heart, and form him to habits of holiness and virtue. By the very same measures, therefore, by which he is led to apply for pardon, he is induced to implore sanctification, and he is compelled to be not more urgent and importunate in his entreaties, for the free remission of his trespasses, than for the thorough renovation of his nature.

But, granting that the legalists should entertain the highest ideas of the importance of his help, and that their petitions for its communication should be ever so fervent and incessant, what security have they for ever obtaining its possession? Are they warranted to count upon his presence and agency while embarked in a scheme, calculated to undermine the foundations of the doctrines of grace, and render his assistance superfluous and nugatory? Is it from such language as the following, that they are authorised to plead or demand his blessed and almighty influences? “ As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace?” Was it for attempting to blend their own works with the righteousness of the Redeemer, which gave occasion to the tremendous declaration, “ Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than that which we have

preached unto you, let him be accursed?" And can a mortal gain a blessing for the very crime which would have brought down a curse upon an angel?

With such prodigious odds against them, can we wonder at the barren and abortive efforts of the partisans of legality? The tenets which they propagate may possess the charm of novelty, they may bear the signatures of the most unrivalled originality and deep research, they may be adorned with the splendours of eloquence, and graced with all that is esteemed and venerated amongst men: but they cannot boast the approbation of the Most High, nor command the gracious and resistless energy of the Eternal Spirit. These are distinctions reserved to consecrate and bless the gospel of the Son of God, and they impart to this sacred system a force and a virtue infinitely superior to every other scheme, which has been recommended to the belief or the obedience of men.

Without his presence and his aid, the law, though expounded with the utmost clearness, and urged with the most fervid and persevering zeal, when addressed to creatures so depraved and perverse as we, is but a dead and useless letter. All that it can do, is merely to point out our duty, and denounce the penalty due for violating or neglecting what it enjoins: but there it leaves us. It gives us neither inclination nor ability to perform its requisitions. It distinctly describes the services

which we owe to God, and peremptorily and authoritatively enforces their fulfilment; it prescribes minutely the number, the weight, the size, and the quality of the brick which we are to fabricate; but it does not furnish us with a single article for their manufacture. It brings together the skin, and bones, and muscles of a moral body; but it has no vivifying principle at command, to inspire it with warmth and animation.

The Spirit of life from the living God pervades the evangelical system. This Holy Being, who has taken it under his immediate and special protection, and presides in high authority over all its varied details, is omnipotent, and can, with ease and efficacy, accomplish whatever purpose he pleases. He can receive of the things of Christ, and shew them to the mind. He can not only explain the Scriptures, but also open our understandings to understand them. He can write the law of God upon our blurred and blotted conscience, renew our depraved and disordered heart, quicken our dull and drowsy powers, make us walk in his statutes and run in the way of his commandments; he can circumcise our heart to love and fear the Lord, form us after the image of our Saviour, and fulfil in us all the good pleasure of his goodness; he can make us delight in this law after the inner man, and prefer its observance to our chief joy; he can manage all our complicated interests, and link our weakness in alliance with his almighty strength.

Till once, therefore, the votaries of self-righteousness can find a match for Omnipotence, it is vain to expect the same success to accompany their exertions, as is seen to attend the labours of those who are engaged in the faithful manifestation of the doctrines of the gospel.

It is impossible to close this chapter without adverting to the endearing proof which it affords us of the infinite importance of the doctrines of the gospel. It is upon the supposed moral efficacy of their own scheme that our opponents assume the greatest state and consequence; and it is from its imaginary tendency, to relax the sinews of duty, and weaken the force of virtuous obligations, that they have contracted the strongest aversion to our system, and assailed it with the most rancorous and persevering hostility. But the fact is, that what they regard as a blemish, constitutes its leading ornament and excellence; and it is exactly where they fancy that it is most weak and vulnerable, where its greatest strength and virtue lie. There is no advantage which it possesses, nor any beneficial effect by which it is attended, but what may be ultimately traced to the truths which it contains. It is by their means that it demonstrates the obligation of the law, and the necessity of obeying it; that it begets love to God, and a desire to fulfil his will; it is through their medium that the Spirit of grace communicates his renovating, purifying, and saving influences. Before the friends of

morality begin to burlesque or revile the doctrines of grace, it is impossible for words to express the service which it would render to the cause of religion and of righteousness, if they would only submit to the pains of making themselves acquainted with the real nature, and sanctifying power of these truths. By opposing their diffusion, though unintentionally, they, in reality, wage war upon the best ally of moral goodness, and the most effectual instrument which God has employed, for securing the holiness and happiness of the human race.

## CHAP. IV.

## CONCLUSION.

*Remarks on the evidence which facts afford of the moral efficacy of the gospel, the importance of evangelical truth, and the necessity of believers maintaining a holy and consistent conduct.*

THUS then, from a pretty extensive view of the subject, we have seen what strong and ample reason there is, on the one hand, to assert the perpetual obligation of the law, and on the other, to maintain the holy tendency of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and the safety with which we may affirm that the most suspected and calumniated truth within the whole compass of revelation, the doctrine of salvation by grace, is a doctrine according to godliness, and of all the instruments that ever were employed for the reformation and improvement of men, is incomparably the most mighty and successful.

Its nature may be misunderstood; the truth may be held in unrighteousness; carnal and worldly professors may bring a reproach upon the good ways of God, and deceive themselves to their everlasting ruin, by fancying that the orthodoxy

of their creeds, and their forwardness and ardour in avowing the tenets which they contain, will prove a substitute for the substantial duties of piety and virtue, and atone for all the criminal defects and gross immoralities of their lives. For what truth is there so clear, unquestionable, and sacred, which has not been abused, or which is not, from the base passions and perverse ingenuity of unholy men, liable to abuse? If the grace of God in redemption has been turned into licentiousness, his goodness in creation and providence has also been converted into an occasion of hardening men in sin, and emboldening them to advance to still more daring heights of outrage and crime. These, however, are evidently perversions of two most amiable and engaging branches of the divine administration: and where would be the wisdom or the piety of attempting to deny or conceal either the one or the other, upon account of any of the mischievous ends to which they have been applied? Notwithstanding all the lamentable purposes to which it has been prostituted by the worthless and the wicked, the goodness of God in its natural tendency leads, and in ten thousand blessed instances has actually led, to repentance: and notwithstanding all the melancholy instances in which the rotten-hearted professors of Christianity have wrested the truths of the gospel to their own destruction; still these doctrines in their own inherent nature teach men

to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in the world; and to insist that they relax the sinews of morality, and engender vicious and unchristian practices, is just as groundless as to maintain that the sun is the cause of cold and darkness, or that the rain and the dew of heaven are the source of blasting and barrenness.

Amidst the many sad and deplorable examples, in which the false and unworthy professors of the gospel have tarnished and dishonoured the fair and venerable name by which we are called, we are very willing to submit the decision of the practical efficacy of evangelical principles, to an appeal to observation and facts. The map of the moral world lies before us, and it can be no difficult nor uninteresting exercise to survey the history of the ages that are past, or take a glance of the present state of the nations, and see what system has done most for the reformation and happiness of the human race.

Look at the popish part of Christendom. Since that church, which has gratuitously assumed the honours of infallibility, curses all who adhere to the New Testament tenet that by grace we are saved, not of works, there surely can be no reason to apprehend, that within the extent of her pale, the success and energy of legal preaching will be obstructed, and counteracted by any struggle with gospel principles; and therefore we may

safely take the manners of the people within the limits of her wide domains, as the index or measure of the practical efficacy of the anti-evangelical scheme. If this shall be admitted to be a fair and legitimate test of its merits, then the barbarous condition of Catholic Ireland, the frivolity and infidelity of France, the intellectual stagnation and death in which the nations of the Peninsula have for centuries been buried, and the gross and disgusting profligacy of the Italian states, are all painful and degrading monuments of the utter uselessness and inefficiency of a dry system of morals, when addressed to the fierce passions and vicious habits of a creature so selfish, darkened, and depraved as man.

Turn your eyes towards the churches of the reformation, and say what principles within their territories have hitherto produced the most sanctifying and transforming results? Who have been most eminent for their personal piety, and most zealous and successful in their exertions to promote the general interests of religion and righteousness? Who have been most cheerful and forward in every good word and work, and most intrepid and indefatigable in every humane and generous enterprise? Who have been the first to proclaim war against every species of profanity and vice, and to form one general crusade against the enormities which poison in their source the sweets of human life, and hold half of the world's

population in wretchedness, and thraldom? Who have been foremost in diving into the depths of dungeons, to take the gauge and measure of the misery which they enclose, and the most assiduous and tender in alleviating the sorrows of the broken-hearted, and ministering to the sufferings of minds diseased? Who have been the first to lead the armies of the living God into the hostile regions of heathen darkness, and the most cool and resolved in facing the dangers and sustaining the sacrifices in this holy, but hazardous warfare? Who have been loudest in reprobating the wrongs of injured Africa, and the most active in tearing off the mask from those popular and imposing, but criminal and detestable passions, which throw nation upon nation in murderous collision, and periodically deluge the earth with blood? Who have been most strenuous in promoting the cause of universal education, and in labouring to raise every individual in the scale of rational existence, by training him to habits of industry and economy, and securing to him the liberal cultivation of his intellectual powers? Who are the men who have replenished the kingdoms with Bibles, and loaded the vehicles of commerce with the Scriptures of truth, to carry to every human dwelling the hopes and consolations of redeeming mercy? Who are the men farthest removed from the corrupt customs and fashionable follies of the day, and most nobly distinguished for their private virtues and

their public worth? Who are the men who shine most conspicuously in the beauties of holiness, who in their temper and conduct bear the closest resemblance to their adorable Master, and of whom we could with the greatest safety and confidence declare that they have been with Jesus, and that in the world of light, where all the faithful find their place, they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever?

Are these illustrious and lovely individuals to be found in the ranks of legality, amongst the votaries of self-righteousness, amongst the zealots for a vague and unsanctified morality, amongst the men who are ever and anon deafening us with the dangers attending the publication of the doctrines of grace, and incessantly assailing us with the cry that, in religion, works of virtue and a good moral life are all in all?

- It is from these men, indeed, that we might naturally expect whatever is most lofty or generous in virtue, and most tender and touching in philanthropy; it is from them that we might expect examples of men most completely alive to the powers of the world to come, and warmed with the most ardent and invincible zeal for their personal improvement, and the universal prosperity and welfare of the human race; it is from these that we might expect a devotion the most sublime, a be-

nevolence that knows no bounds, and a beneficence that never is weary.

But to the honest and intelligent of every rank and class, and even to these declaimers themselves, I appeal, if these very men, of whom, according to their own professions, all these high expectations might be reasonably entertained, are not the real antinomians of the age? To themselves, I appeal, if they have not departed as far from the elevated and holy standard of Christian morality, as from the pure and unbending rule of Christian doctrine? if they are not just as low and defective in the practice of virtue, as they are arrogant and overbearing in urging their claim to a superiority, or rather a monopoly, of moral worth? and if the loftiness of their pretensions does not afford a striking contrast to the humbleness of their attainments, to their remissness in their professional duties, and their miserable failures, when at any time they are stimulated to the attempt, to rouse and reclaim the degenerate and vicious in the world around them?

The utter inefficiency of every self-justifying scheme is so unquestionable and notorious, that it may almost be laid down as a theological axiom, That the distance of any man from an evangelical creed, may be uniformly measured by the looseness of his principles, and the irregularities of his life.

If we would wish to see virtue reduced to prac-

tice, and embodied in the conduct and conversation, we must look to the men who are the objects of legal ridicule and odium. Whilst they, themselves, are slumbering in all the indolence of self-complacent repose, their traduced and calumniated brethren, who are held up to the scorn and hatred of the public, as the enemies of morality and the patrons of licentiousness and impiety, are shining in the beauties of holiness, and abounding in works of faith, and in labours of love; each is found at his post cheerfully prosecuting the business of his high vocation, striving by his example, his counsels, his prayers, and his efforts to advance the holiness and happiness of the human race, and extend the blessings of the great salvation to all who have been involved in the horrors of our common apostasy.

If there be one class of men more than another, who steadily and uniformly hold forth the light and loveliness of personal piety and concern for the public welfare; in whose breasts the fire of devotion burns more brightly, and the glow of benevolence maintains a more constant and lively influence; who stick more closely to the footsteps of Immanuel, and press more firmly and vigorously on in the career of virtuous improvement and religious perfection, it is the suspected and defamed votaries of the doctrines of grace.

If, indeed, we were to rank in the list of the virtues, servility and dependence, intemperance

and dissipation, conformity o the world in its despicable follies, and in its gay and frivolous amusements, a rancour that is unrelenting, and a bitterness that knows no bounds against all who step beyond the beaten track of hereditary and prescriptive performance, and manifest in religion an earnestness, and a fervour in some degree proportioned to the infinite magnitude and eternal duration of its realities: if we were to rank in the list of virtues a charity which pertinaciously denies the existence of piety and principle, where the most amiable and irresistible evidence is given of their presence; but which never fails, but believes all things, and hopes all things, where no circumstance exists on which the most indulgent candour can tack the slightest hope, where no trace of living substantial godliness can be discerned, but where the most awful facts appear in quick succession to demonstrate a mind alienated from the love of God, and a soul still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity: if we were to rank in the list of virtues, a religion so retired and modest as utterly to defy discovery, a religion so sublimated and refined as to give no offence, either to the fastidiousness of philosophic scepticism or the grossness of vulgar profanity, a religion which, on the longest acquaintance and the closest intimacy, cannot be detected in a single act of domestic worship, in one exercise of personal piety, nor in a solitary decided effort to extend

the interests of genuine godliness; then, indeed, we would be obliged to yield the palm of superiority to our rivals; for these are virtues which the gospel neither inspires nor recognizes, and they are, therefore, among the graceful embellishments of life to which we can urge no title.

But if we are to form our estimate of moral worth from the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, or from the infallible standard furnished by his word, of what a man of God ought to flee, and the things in conversation and in doctrine in which he is required to shew himself a pattern to believers; if we are to regard as essential and indispensable elements in moral excellence, supreme love to God, and unreserved devotedness to his service; a gratitude to the Redeemer that admits no limits, and an affection that constrains us to spend and be spent in his cause; an engaging attention to the long detail of private duties, and a faithful discharge of the whole range of relative and social obligations; a mind ever alive to the grandeur of eternal matters, and wholly occupied with the great business of life; then, without the least hesitation or fear, we may assign the honourable and enviable pre-eminence of moral worth to the adherents of evangelical truth.

Look through the whole length and breadth of moral obligation, and say where within all its extensive compass is there a single article, that is either amiable or useful, in which our opponents

excel, in which we are not above them? Are they the patrons of morality, just, faithful, liberal? So are we. Are they courteous, compassionate, and kind? So are we. Are they the friends of public order, and the zealous advocates for the cultivation of external rectitude and decorum? We are more. Far from confining our attention to the temporal comfort or outward reformation of our fellow-immortals, we wish to implant the fear and love of God within them, and to make all their conduct in time bear upon the preparation requisite to secure the allotments of a happy eternity. In no moral nor religious duty, which they esteem or practise, do we deliberately come behind them; and to all the commendable habits which they cultivate, we add the whole of that peculiarly Christian class of virtues which springs from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and gratitude and devotion for the rich and immense blessings of redemption.

Whilst, therefore, with an unanimity and perseverance which seem to indicate that their measures flow from the inherent principles of their system, we find them almost in a body ranging themselves firmly under the banners of opposition to the cause of missions, the dispersion of the Scriptures, and the plans formed for reviving a spirit of vital godliness in the churches of the reformation, and for propagating the gospel in the world: whilst, some of them, even in the sacred office, sneer at

family devotion, and at meetings for religious conference and prayer, and lend the sanction of their names, and the influence of their talents to give increased currency to the already too wide circulation of writings that celebrate the praises of debauchery and licentiousness, and are calculated to annihilate every trace of sound and substantial seriousness; every evangelical Christian in a greater or less proportion contributes to the encouragement and support of the religious institutions around him; and the world has yet to witness the prodigy of a single consistent friend of the doctrines of grace, prostituting his powers to the furtherance of profanity and vice, and leaguing himself in friendly alliance with the enemies of the cause of Christ and of God. So far from impeding the march of religious truth, bantering men out of the practice of piety, and endeavouring to lull the spirit-stirring principles of the present generation of believers into the indolence and apathy of the past, he decidedly lends his aid to strengthen and confirm their enterprizing ardour, and cordially bids God speed to all their beneficent undertakings. The man who has an evangelical creed in his head, and the smallest particle of evangelical principle in his heart, would revolt from the shocking proposal to join the confederates against the evangelizing of the world, and regard a moment's compliance with the suggestion, as an instance of apostasy from the be-

nevolence of the gospel, and an act of treason against his God. For whilst he knows that they who love God, are enjoined to love their brother also; whilst his Bible tells him that he who winneth souls is wise, and assures him, if we forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain, that he who pondereth the heart considers it, and he that keepeth our soul knows it, and that he will render to every man according to his works; on what ground can he conclude that he is possessed of any sincere love to God, or submission to his authority, while he declines to co-operate with any, who are associated on scriptural maxims, for sending the knowledge of the great salvation to the utmost ends of the world, and filling the whole earth with the Redeemer's glory?

Nothing is more common than to see the self-righteous professors of religion frequenting the fashionable entertainments of the day, but rare and scanty in their attendance upon the public ordinances of worship, and destitute of the very shadow of family piety; factious, turbulent and discontented in their spirits, and crooked, cunning and fraudulent in their transactions. But such is the sanctifying and transforming efficacy of the gospel, that, from the day that any know the grace of God in truth, they shake their hands free of every dishonest gain, take leave of all the unprofitable and corrupting amusements in which

they formerly delighted, cultivate a peaceable spirit and follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another, their houses become a habitation of God, and till the infirmities of life overtake them, on no part of the sacred day are their seats in the sanctuary abandoned. Whilst the zealots for good works leave their favourite moral preachers to waste their strength upon the desert air, the believers in the doctrines of grace manifest at once the purity of their motives, and their reverence for the appointments of God, by the numbers in which they assemble in the place of prayer, and the diligence with which they reduce to practice the lessons which are there inculcated.

These facts appear to be too plain and obvious to require any additional proof of the sanctifying power of the gospel. The men, who unfortunately withstand us, will be the very last to deny their reality. The very men who are the most keen in their attacks upon the correctness of our principles, will be the last to question the holiness of our lives. Their opposition to our measures, arising from a conviction that a firm adherence to the doctrines of grace is totally incompatible with those habits of indolence and temporizing in which they have indulged; their dislike to associate with us, from the dread that the conversation shall assume too grave and serious a turn, that our intercourse shall not possess a suf-

ficient seasoning of hilarity and light heartedness, that rational and religious topics shall form too large a subject of discourse, and devotional exercises engross too great a proportion of the time, are all demonstrations to their own minds that an evangelical creed is not productive of immoral conduct. The application of the terms puritans, precisians, methodists, highflyers, enthusiasts, fanatics, the saints, the godly, and the other epithets of reproach and detestation which in every age, from the atrocities of the Arminian Laud, and the legalised butcheries of the Royal Brothers, the votaries of legality have so plentifully heaped upon their evangelical brethren, are at once a public and open acknowledgement of their own religious and moral deficiencies, and an honourable and lasting attestation to the spiritual and holy tendency of the gospel. The compliment indeed is unintended; but it is a thousand times more precious and decisive than any direct evidence which the friends of grace can bring. The force of truth must be great, when even an enemy is compelled to confess it. Men may talk as they like of the darkness of the sun; but when we hear them complaining that its splendour is intolerable, this is sufficient to satisfy us that that luminary does not labour under any want of light. The Romans might reject the claims of our Redeemer, and take a criminal hand in his crucifixion; but we can be at no loss to form an estimate of his real character,

when we hear, not from the disciples of the sufferer, but from their own officer, who was appointed to superintend the horrid transaction, the exclamation, "Truly this was the Son of God." And men may revile as they choose the licentiousness of our creed, but so long as they continue to hate and censure us for the strictness of our lives, they are unconsciously paying the most valuable tribute to the purity and moral energy of our faith.

If then we are to judge of the nature of the tree by the quality of the fruit; if the validity of the prophet's pretensions to inspiration was to be ascertained by the accomplishment of the sign on which he staked his claims; if in the great controversy betwixt the worshippers of Jehovah and the worshippers of Baal, the object of adoration who answered by fire was to be admitted to be the God; and if, in the present case, we are to determine the moral efficacy of the evangelical and anti-evangelical schemes by an appeal to facts, and pronounce that system, which succeeds most effectually in renovating the depraved nature of man, and in forming its subjects to habits of beneficence and piety, to be the work of God and the most practical and useful; there can be no uncertainty respecting the result. The transcendent holiness of believers triumphantly evinces the purifying influence of the truths which they have embraced, and leaves no doubt that the signal excellence of

their lives arises from the prodigiously superior moral efficacy of their principles.

With these facts lying fully before them, there is great reason to suspect that the hostility displayed by many to the doctrines of the gospel, and the alarming clamour industriously kept up in certain quarters about its antinomian tendency, are less owing to an aversion to evangelical truth and an excessive zeal for the interests of virtue, than to a horror of those severe and elevated morals which it is found uniformly and necessarily to inspire, and a well founded terror lest, by subscribing to its obnoxious articles, they should be obliged to renounce their present secular and easy habits, and adopt all the strictness, and all the purity and all the piety, and all the fervent and unwearied beneficence enjoined in the pages of the New Testament, and practised by the genuine and consistent adherents of the evangelical system.

If this surmise be well founded, let those whose consciences tell them that on them its burden may justly rest, wipe off the stain which it affixes by either lowering their tone of accusation, or by becoming more active and zealous in the cause of goodness. But if this suspicion be false; if any who oppose our principles, have a sincere and honest concern for the advancement of the cause of holiness, let them be entreated to show the reality of their regard for its interests, by studying the doctrines of the gospel.

It is to be hoped that thousands are animated with the generous and noble desire of extending the interests of whatever is lovely and good. Now, of all the instruments that can be employed to secure the object of this sublime and laudable ambition, the enforcement of evangelical truth is infinitely the most powerful and efficacious. Multitudes in every age have been conscientiously and sedulously labouring in the humane and sacred employment of promoting the reign of righteousness and peace. But whether we look back upon the transactions of the past, or take a survey of the operations of the present day; though the preachers of legality may abide at their post and maintain an unshaken fidelity to their cause; though they may be instant in season, and out of season; though they may press into their service, and expend upon their task every resource which genius or science can supply, and urge their exhortations with all the vehemence and tenderness of the most brilliant and persuasive eloquence, we find, notwithstanding all their earnestness and all their efforts, that mortification and disappointment still continue to cover all their exertions. The sinner still remains entrenched in his fastnesses, and the kingdom of darkness feels none of those blows that are aimed against it. The preaching of the dry, jejune and frigid maxims of morality is unblessed of Heaven, and never has succeeded in renovating, in sanctifying, nor in saving a single soul.

A very different result, however, attends the sincere, the faithful and cordial manifestation of the doctrines of the gospel. They find their way directly to the heart, and carry, in willing and delighted captivity, the best affections and strongest energies of our nature. When in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Accordingly, whilst the course of the moralising ministrations of our antagonists may be traced, by the spiritual sterility and dreariness which they leave along their track, the direction of an evangelical ministry may be discovered by the moral health and freshness, by the fertility and beauty which, like the river of the water of life, it diffuses wherever it flows.

If, therefore, you feel the generous glow of compassion for the perishing children of men, and would gladly stretch out a hand for their relief and rescue; if you would wish to see the kingdom of God established amongst them, and the work of piety and righteousness every where triumphant, search the Scriptures, give your days and nights to the study of gospel doctrines, and preach the truth as it is in Jesus. This will warm and cheer your own hearts; this will impart an indescribable charm and unction to your labours; this will bring down the influences of the Holy Spirit to your aid, and clothe your ministrations with a matchless and resistless energy. The gos-

pel is the work of the Most High, and his blessing is in it. It is the power of God unto salvation. But every other invention or scheme, however ingenious and plausible, is devoid of his approbation, and in practice, must prove totally abortive. The gospel is the only mean for sanctifying and saving the sons of men. There are ten thousand roads to everlasting ruin; but there is only one way to real holiness and to never-ending happiness, and that one is through the Lord Jesus Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." He himself declares "I am the way, and the truth, and the life:" and the same heavenly messenger who said, "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life," assures us "that he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Judge, then, of the importance of evangelical truth, and the obligations binding upon the ministers of religion to preach the gospel. The temporal, and the immortal welfare of all the people committed to our trust, is involved in the reception which they give it. If they embrace it, heaven and eternal glory are their own; if they disregard it, it is at their peril; if they reject it, they must inevitably and most miserably perish. And what would it profit a man to gain the whole world,

and lose his own soul? Compared with the loss of the soul, all the calamities of life shrink into mere insignificance; compared with the loss of the soul, all the sufferings that can be endured, for ten thousand ages, are less than nothing and vanity.

And, if such be the value of one soul, how precious must be the souls of a whole congregation! Since, therefore, the everlasting salvation of all the people of our charge, depends upon the faithful preaching of the gospel, how cruel, how base, and detestable, or rather diabolical, must it be to adulterate or conceal it, to disguise or keep it back? If you had a process in a court of justice, on the issue of which your reputation and honour, your fortune, your liberty, and life were suspended; what would you think of the counsellor, whom you had employed to defend your cause, if he were deliberately to suppress the facts which constitute the very strength and substance of your plea, and which, if known, would have infallibly ensured you a triumphant acquittal, and thus, by his criminal omission to reduce you to disgrace and indigence, to exile or death? Were you dangerously ill, and to call a physician, who at once discovered both the nature of your malady, and the means of removing it; what opinion could you form of him, if, after all, he were designedly to withhold the cure, and allow you to languish in weakness and suffering, and coolly leave you to expire in the midst of the most excruciating tortures? But, how in-

finitely greater are the wickedness and the inhumanity of that man, who is appointed to watch for souls, who is told of the unequalled efficacy of evangelical truth, and of the utter worthlessness and inefficiency of every other moral instrument, and who, after all, should detain from his people the knowledge of the gospel, and, by this culpable negligence, permit souls formed for boundless blessedness, souls capable of associating with the angels of light, and of exulting, through the mighty roll of endless ages, in the vision and enjoyment of God, to sink into the regions of darkness and sorrow, to become the subjects of perpetual pain, and the eternal derision of devils? Can such a character possess either love to God or man? Can he, amidst all his noisy and outrageous clamour for morality and virtue, lay any valid claim to the possession, either of the principles of religion or the feelings of humanity? If an apostle asks, Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? may we not much more justly put this question to the man, or the minister, who sees his people fitting themselves for destruction, and yet refuses to give them warning of their danger; who sees them hardening themselves in security and worldliness, and yet declines to undergo any labour necessary to secure their deliverance from endless perdition? If intervening ages have ex-

erated the barbarity of Nero, who, in a general famine, when many were starving and distracted from want, ordered a vessel to come from Egypt, at that time the granary of Italy, laden with sand for the use of the wrestlers, and thus insulted the sufferings of his subjects, by contributing, in such an extremity, to the public sports, and furnishing games for the Theatre, when the city of Rome was in such distress as was sufficient to have melted every heart, but that of the hardened monster who was placed at its head; in what light must the guilt and baseness of that minister be viewed, by all who are capable of taking in the full dimensions of the awful calamities which he entails, who, from the love of ease, of wealth, of fame, or any other motive which can influence the human mind, is led to provide for his own amusement or the entertainment of his hearers, whilst he leaves their souls to famish for want of spiritual nourishment, and perish for lack of saving knowledge?

From the nature of the discussion contained in the preceding chapters, it is to be hoped that the friends of evangelical religion will see that they have no cause to be ashamed of the distinguishing articles of their creed. However much these tenets may have been traduced and vilified, under God they have been the only means of preserving the existence of righteousness and holiness amongst the descendants of Adam. They have proved the salt of the earth and the light of the

world. Amidst all the profligacy and wickedness of the human race, they have in former times offered a successful resistance to the universal prevalence of depravity and vice, and to the present hour they are preserving a rich infusion of moral principle and piety in active circulation amongst the tainted and vitiated mass of this world's population. If at this moment there be such a thing as genuine religion, or godliness, to be found within the confines of the globe, it is to the doctrines of the cross that its presence must be ascribed. Wherever the interests of virtue have possessed a decided ascendancy, it is to the strength and efficacy of these truths that its triumphs are owing. And on looking forward to those scenes of brighter vision, which the God of love has reserved to refresh our future prospects, and dignify his closing dispensations to the children of men, when the people shall be all righteous, when there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain, it is by the preaching of the cross that this glorious consummation shall be achieved. It is not till Jesus shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth; it is not till the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ, an event which never can take place till this gospel is preached and embraced in all nations, and till in the esteem and in the dependence of every human creature

**Christ become all in all, that the tabernacle of God shall be pitched amongst men, and the whole earth filled with the fruits of righteousness, and with the knowledge of his glory.**

Whether, therefore, you attend to its past or present effects, to the benefits which it has already produced, or to the blessings with which it is still pregnant, you have no reason to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor hide your attachment to those precious truths which he has bequeathed as the ornament and riches of his church. Fidelity to him unites with benevolence to man, to compel you to hold fast the form of sound words which you have received and heard. By these strong and affecting considerations let me beseech you then, with one mind, to strive together for the faith, and to look to yourselves that no man move you from the hope, of the gospel.

But if you are required to be valiant for the truth, remember, I entreat you, that, by an authority equally high and irresistible, you are bound to cherish the love of holiness in your hearts, and to exhibit in your lives a bright and lovely example of the transforming and purifying power of faith.

Without holiness what consistent claim can you advance to the Christian character, or what well supported hope can you entertain of heaven, when you are told that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his, and are assured that without holiness no man shall see the Lord?

Without holiness, what honour can you confer on your Saviour and Lord, or what credit can you bring upon the good ways of God? And know ye not that believers are called out of darkness into his marvellous light, in order that they might show forth his praise; and that he has chosen them and ordained them that they might bring forth fruit? Know ye not that ye are commanded to hold forth the word of life, and to make your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven?

Without holiness what service can you render to society? And need I tell you that by Him, by whom we are enjoined to love the Lord our God with our whole heart and soul, we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves; and that by the very same authority by which we are obliged to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are required to do good unto all men as we have opportunity? But how can you comply with these distinct and clear and positive intimations of the Divine will, without maintaining a holy and heavenly life, and labouring by every mean within your reach to promote the comfort and improvement of all around you? What signifies the most judicious and philanthropic creed if its principles are never embodied in the life nor reduced to practice? What is the value of wisdom, if its reputed possessor perseveres in acting the part of a fool and a driveller? What is the use of science in a teacher if he never brings

forward any of its truths and discoveries, but one weary year after another continues to retail to his pupils the most inane and contemptible puerilities? And what advantage can the world reap from the benevolence of the man, whose tender and generous feelings are all confined within the narrow circuit of his own breast, and amidst all his pretensions to humanity and charity, never can be detected in a solitary act of liberality or kindness? The inhabitants of the adjoining planets, for ought that we can affirm to the contrary, may all be deeply interested in our welfare, and at this very moment from these surrounding worlds ten thousand eyes may be beaming on us with benignity: but so long as no expression of their sympathy and affection can reach us, what benefit can we derive from their most friendly and beneficent regards? And what is the worth or use of our speculative principles, or of our religious professions, if these are not employed to meliorate our moral character, and contribute to the worth and happiness of our fellow immortals? Though possessed of the orthodoxy of an apostle and the intelligence of an angel, so long as we decline actively and earnestly to engage in the discharge of the duties and obligations which we owe to God and man, pray what greater profit can our brethren derive from our creed or our profession than from the benevolence and the virtues of the inhabitants of Jupiter or Saturn?

Without holiness a profession of Christianity is not only unprofitable, but it is positively and unspeakably pernicious. Supposing that it were possible, which in fact it is not, to separate the joys of religion from the fruits of righteousness, and that you could live upon your Christian experience whilst you displayed no concern for the ends of practical goodness; what could this avail? What care the men of the world for the interior exercises of the spiritual life? What do they know or care for the warmth of devotion, the meltings of penitence, the aspirations of hope, the longings of love, or the transports of faith? These are matters to which they are strangers, and in which their unhappy situation precludes them from having any participation. But they can judge, and that too most nicely, of the nature of character and the quality of actions. What then are they to think when they find, that those who pretend to be above them in faith, are below them in practice; and that those who vaunt of being before them in principle, are behind them in the exercise of every valuable and substantial virtue? What idea must they frame of that system on which your conduct is professedly formed, when they see you living according to the course of the world, and walking, as others walk, in the vanity of their minds; betrayed into passion, overcome by intemperance, indulging in levity or moroseness, stooping to the crooked arts and dishonest devices of

the fraudulent and worthless? What worse than this can be looked for from those who neither know God nor obey the gospel of his Son? All that they can do is only to violate the commandments of the Lord, and fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind, to drink and swear, to lie and deceive, to neglect the ordinances of religion, and omit altogether, or perform with languor and remissness, their personal and social duties. And if, with the profession of religion, you can retain these vile tempes and infamous deeds, what has the gospel done in your behalf? or what benefit could the world at all gain from the reception of Christianity? If religion can neither elevate your character nor improve your conduct, you certainly may discard it with impunity: and if you may renounce it with safety, others surely cannot be condemned for persisting in their refusal to accept it at all. If they know that their character is as fair, can any inference be more natural and just than to conclude, that, in the day of retri&ution, their state must be as safe, as yours?

If their good name is traduced, if their ignorance is overreached, if their property is unjustly seized, if in their indigence or distress relief is unmercifully withheld, will it alleviate the bitterness arising from the injury which they have sustained, or reconcile them to the tenets that you profess, to find that their defamer, their entrapper, their oppressor styles himself a Christian? An enemy to

God and a foe to our holy faith, cannot do more to disgust the minds of the infidel and worldly at the doctrines of grace, and prevent their progress in the earth, than the pretended friends of Jesus by acting in opposition to their avowed principles, and contradicting in their conduct the truths which they verbally maintain.

Let all then who cherish an attachment to our Divine and adorable Redeemer, be entreated to be open in their profession and consistent in their lives. His cause is entrusted to your care. You are the temporary guardians of his honour and his interests: and so far as your talents and your labours can extend, you are answerable for its credit and success. Do your part then to support its rights with dignity and effect. Live in a manner becoming your principles and your prospects. Wherein the men of the world excel, let them find that you are still far above them. Let them see from the heavenliness of your tempers and the holiness of your lives, that the blessed truths on which you have placed your hopes, enable you to carry the interests of righteousness to an extent and an elevation far beyond their rivalship and reach. Hold forth the word of life and abound more and more in every good word and work; that, if the self-righteous and the unbelieving shall persist in the use of their unhallowed sarcasm, that the gospel is a sanctuary which throws open its gates for the admission and protection of the

most wretched and worthless, we may be able, in the spirit of a Christian father, to repel the intended indignity by replying, "True indeed, it is a sanctuary to afford them refuge, but it is also an hospital which gives health and soundness to all its inmates," and the school in which the Lord Jesus Christ, by the work of his Spirit and the discipline of his grace, is training up his many sons and daughters, in habits of faith and holiness, for the inheritance and services of eternal glory.

## THE END.

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Death of their Believing Friends.**

## ERRATA.

Page 12 line 12 after *is*, insert *all*.

- — — 13 dele *all*.
- — — 16 for constiution, *read* constitution.
- 38 — 17 piace the semicolon after *crown*.
- 41 — 29 for the period, place a colon.
- 77 — 9 for amendments, *read* amendment.
- 101 — 30 for *wo*, *read* *we*.
- 106 — 17 for *untegrity* *read* *integrity*.
- 143 — 14 for *or*, *read* *and*.
- 154 — 13 *erase up*.
- 158 — 14 for *nor*, *read* *not*.
- 168 — 16 for *prerogative*, *read* *prerogatives*.
- 202 — 27 for *adversarses*, *read* *adversaries*.
- 204 — 18 for *safesy* *read* *safety*.







